

**Reading the Politics of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*:  
A Study in Ambiguity**

**Kavita Ivy Nandan**

Thesis submitted to the Australian National University for the degree of Master of Arts

Date Submitted 26 August 1994

This thesis is my own work and all sources used have been acknowledged.

(Signed) *Kavita Nandan*

**Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>		1
<b>Chapter One</b>	British Colonialism	14
<b>Chapter Two</b>	Liberal Humanism	56
<b>Chapter Three</b>	Indian Nationalism	90
<b>Chapter Four</b>	India	131
<b>Conclusion</b>		158
<b>Bibliography</b>		163

## **Acknowledgements**

My sincere thanks to my supervisor, Professor Iain Wright for his constant encouragement and valuable suggestions. I am grateful to my friend Maria Baveas for her assistance; to my family my deep appreciation.



## Abbreviations

<i>Naik</i>	Naik, M. K. <i>Mirror on the Wall: Images of India and the Englishman in Anglo-Indian Fiction</i> . New Delhi: Sterling, 1991.
<i>Trivedi</i>	Trivedi, Harish. <i>Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India</i> . Calcutta: Papyrus, 1993.
<i>Culture and Imperialism</i>	Said, Edward W. <i>Culture and Imperialism</i> . London: Chatto and Windus, 1993.
<i>Orientalism</i>	Said, Edward W. <i>Orientalism</i> (1978). London: Penguin, 1987.
<i>Two Cheers</i>	Forster, E. M. <i>Two Cheers For Democracy</i> (1951). Abinger Edition, vol. 11. London: Edward Arnold, 1972.
<i>Abinger Harvest</i>	Forster, E. M. <i>Abinger Harvest</i> . London: Edward Arnold, 1936.
<i>Howards End</i>	Forster, E. M. <i>Howards End</i> (1910). London: Penguin, 1941.

## Introduction

In postcolonial cultures two contemporary reading practices, the postcolonial and postmodern, emerge at the forefront. Both are committed to the subversion of authoritative and monocultural forms of discourse. Edward Said, in particular, has helped us to see the necessity of this commitment when evaluating canonical English literature. According to him, the novels of Jane Austen and E. M. Forster, among others, perpetuate a master narrative in which a consciousness of colonialism and the colonised's perspective(s) is absent.<sup>1</sup> Salman Rushdie is another writer and critic who believes in the importance of making explicit the link between literature and political discourse which has previously been suppressed. Harish Trivedi, an Indian critic and perhaps representative of an emerging consciousness amongst Indian academics, similarly believes that literature should not be seen “merely as literature but also as part of a larger reality and particularly in the case of these studies [colonial studies], as part of colonial politics.”<sup>2</sup> However, when the postcolonial project in practice is merely a negative one<sup>3</sup>, it can become oppressive in its turn. In other words, enact a kind of inverse colonialism, if it fails to take into account the political and ethical ambiguities in the canonical text it sets out to subvert.

*The Empire Writes Back*, still the standard textbook on postcolonial writing, states its theoretical position in the following comment: “the subversion of a canon . . . will

---

<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Said in his book *Culture And Imperialism* is critical of how literary criticism itself has tended to ignore the relevance of imperialism: “The major critical practitioners simply ignore imperialism”. He looks at Lionel Trilling's ‘apolitical’ reading of Forster's *Howards End* as an example (76–77).

<sup>2</sup> Trivedi 21.

<sup>3</sup> This process of revising texts can be positive as a well. For example, Jane Marcus in “Britannia Rules *The Waves*” suggests that Virginia Woolf's (she is part of the Bloomsbury group which is caricatured in terms of their ‘apoliticalness’) *The Waves* is politically aware in a subtle and complex way. *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century ‘British’ Literary Canons*, ed. Karen R. Lawrence (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992) 136-162.

result not only in the replacement of some texts by others . . . but equally crucially by the reconstruction of the so-called canonical texts through alternative reading practices.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, perhaps too much emphasis is placed on the reading practice as compared to the novel itself and the individual author. Instead of merely reconstructing the novel from a political position, surely a more productive practice would be an integrative one which focused significantly on the internal patterns created by the novel. The novel under study, *A Passage to India*, contains a fundamental suspicion of the method of reconstruction in arriving at the ‘truth’ or ‘truths’ of the colonial experience, India and life in general.

When the main character, the Englishman Cyril Fielding, tries to restore his friendship with Aziz, the Indian protagonist, this method fails: “Cyril followed him through the mud, apologizing, laughing a little, wanting to argue and reconstruct, pointing out with irrefragable logic that he had married, not Heaslop’s betrothed, but Heaslop’s sister.”<sup>5</sup> Aziz responds by saying: “What difference did it make at this hour of the day? He had built his life on a mistake, but he had built it. Speaking in Urdu, that the children might understand, he said: ‘Please do not follow us, whomever you marry. I wish no Englishman or Englishwoman to be my friend’” (298).

Fielding fails to establish a bond of trust between himself and Aziz because his reconstruction is selective. Fielding’s concentration only on Aziz’s mistake in thinking that he had married Heaslop’s betrothed not his sister is incomplete in that it does not take into account his larger betrayal of Aziz. The postcolonial analysis attempts to render a more complete picture of the truth by showing how it is Fielding’s lack of empathy with Aziz’s colonisation, because he is apolitical or a colonial, that results in the failure. This view is an important one, however, just as the novel shows that Fielding’s reconstruction is limited, so, in a similar way, the postcolonial reconstruction

---

<sup>4</sup>Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989) 189.

<sup>5</sup>E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, 1924 (London: Penguin, 1936) 298. All references to this edition appear in the text.

can be limited too. While it is necessary to acknowledge the coloniser-colonised relationship, this is still not the complete picture.

An alternative method of reaching the truth is suggested in another character, the Hindu Professor Godbole:

Thus Godbole, though she was not important to him, remembered an old woman he had met in Chandrapore days. Chance brought her into his mind while it was in this heated state, he did not select her, she happened to occur among the throng of soliciting images, a tiny splinter, and he impelled her by his spiritual force to that place where completeness can be found. Completeness not reconstruction. . . . He loved the wasp equally, he impelled it likewise, he was imitating God. And the stone where the wasp clung – could he . . . no, he had been wrong to attempt the stone, logic and conscious effort had seduced. . . . (283–284)

This suggests the importance of attempting to see things as a whole or at least beyond the single perspective. ‘Completeness’ is a mystical idea in the novel, but not simply in a traditional sense for it suggests an ethical and political concept as well. The alternative method of completeness is a less subjective and more ‘objective’ way of looking at things. However, it becomes subjective once ‘logic’ and ‘conscious effort’ intervene. This is symbolic of the novel’s scepticism of this method as well, for it realises that it is impossible for the individual author or critic to encapsulate the whole of reality, in this case the colonial experience, from one political perspective. The novel’s invention of ‘India’ is symbolic of this postmodern reality and it acknowledges that it is able to give one of the many versions of a colonial/Indian reality that exist.

In practice, Said’s criticism of *A Passage to India* is modified by a specific political position and this results in his largely negative reading of the novel. Ironically, in theory, Said suggests in his essay ‘Secular Criticism’, that it is the duty of criticism to view reality in a wider sense:

But on the important matter of a critical position, its relationship to Marxism, liberalism, even anarchism, it needs to be said that criticism modified in advance by labels like ‘Marxism’ or ‘Liberalism’ is, in my view, an oxymoron. . . . The net effect of “doing” Marxist criticism or writing at the present time is of course to declare political preference, but it is also to put oneself outside a great deal of things going on in the world, so to speak, and in other kinds of criticism.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, “it puts oneself outside a great deal of things going on” in the world of the text. Aijaz Ahmed, a Marxist critic, has criticised this view of Said’s, suggesting that it is not an ethical position to take:

The pain of an ethical life is that all fundamental bondings, affiliations, stable political positions, require that one ceases to desire, voraciously, everything that is available in this world; that one learns to deny oneself some of the pleasures, rewards, consumptions, even affiliations of certain sorts.<sup>7</sup>

Ahmed advocates taking a specific political position to counteract this postmodern reality that Said suggests in theory. Too great a postmodern openness is ethically disturbing as a practice if taken to its extremes. This is because, for the text in question, *A Passage to India*, it does not acknowledge that the novel is asserting a political and ethical point of view even while it is partially deconstructing in its awareness of a “great deal of things”.

*A Passage to India* incorporates both ways of viewing reality. That is, the novel views it from a specific liberal humanist stance of anti-colonialism as well as from this sense of a “great deal of things”. Paul Armstrong, writing from a postmodern perspective, evokes the heterogeneity of the text because he sees its internal patterns of deconstruction. The novel, he suggests reflects the “contingency and contestability” of “particular values” and “equally plausible ways of thinking”<sup>8</sup> According to Armstrong,

---

<sup>6</sup> Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> Aijaz Ahmed, *In Theory* (London: Verso, 1992) 219.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Armstrong, “Reading India: E.M. Forster and the Politics of Interpretation,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 38.4 (1992) : 365.

Forster already seems to have succeeded in carrying out what Lionel Trilling identifies as the duty of literary criticism, that is, to remind liberalism of “variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty.”<sup>9</sup> This is what liberalism was originally supposed to be about although in practice it strayed from this path.<sup>10</sup> Trilling also acknowledges that Forster realises the limitations of the liberal imagination when he remarks: “For all his long commitment to the doctrines of liberalism, Forster is at war with the liberal imagination.”<sup>11</sup> However, postcolonial critics have not recognised this ambiguity in the novel. Rather, they generally interpret this ambiguity as Forster’s ‘characteristic’ defused sense of politics.

Many recent critics no longer accept the evaluation of *A Passage to India* in the past where the novel was admired for its anti-colonial stance.<sup>12</sup> Now, they see the novel’s main discourse – liberal humanism – as being unequivocally complicit with colonialism. They tend to see it in this way because it is not a radical novel, although it anticipates change. The ambiguity of Forster’s representation of the colonial experience is suggested in Rushdie’s summarising of Antonio Gramsci: “the old was dying, and yet the new could not be born.”<sup>13</sup> Forster saw the situation in terms of an Empire falling but it was more difficult for him to imagine the birth of a new spirit. The novel locates itself on such a cusp and this is effectively summarised by Benita Parry: “*A Passage to India* can be seen as at once inheriting and interrogating the discourses of the Raj.”<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1970) 14.

<sup>10</sup> Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination* 14.

<sup>11</sup> Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination* 14.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* has undergone a similar revision. For example Chinua Achebe condemns the novel as being racist and imperial, not anti-imperial as it had generally been seen in English Literature all these years, in his book *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990) 1-20.

<sup>13</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta Books, 1992) 1.

<sup>14</sup> Benita Parry, “The Politics of Representation in *A Passage to India*,” *A Passage To India*, ed. John Beer (London: The Macmillan Press, 1985) 28.

Trivedi is an example of a recent critic who is very sceptical of the degree to which the novel really is anti-colonial in its critique of the Empire. Like Said, Trivedi attributes this failure to Forster's liberal ideology: "a political concept which lies at the heart of the whole discussion is the Liberal-Imperialist project of British rule in India to which both Forster and Thompson largely subscribed<sup>15</sup>, even as each sought to critique it from his own distinct point of view. . . ."<sup>16</sup> Liberalism here is automatically seen as being a bed partner with imperialism. According to Trivedi this ideology has resulted in a historical misrepresentation of the facts of the colonial situation:

a chronological misalignment, which was begun by Forster in 1913 following his first visit to India, but completed only in 1924, following his second visit of 1921 to what was politically an altogether different India. In the event, Forster's novel retains a more assured pre-War imperial aura, while also reflecting erratically and often unwittingly some events and attitudes from the more turbulent decade that intervened as the novel hung fire. As a result, we get a sense in *A Passage to India* not only of inconsistency of detail, but of a larger lack of historical integrity.<sup>17</sup>

Liberal humanism is furthermore seen to be complicit with colonialism by contributing to the colonial discourse in the following ways. Firstly, it seemed to concentrate on a nineteenth century traditional liberal humanist theme of personal relations and individuals which tended to ignore colonial politics. This discourse was guilty of universalising experience. Trivedi critiques Forster and *A Passage to India* on both accounts:

To be anti-nationalist or to be transcendently apolitical can itself be a manifestation of a kind of liberal humanism, and thus

---

<sup>15</sup> This kind of accusation totally ignores Forster's political journalism in which he overtly expressed his political views. He made the appropriate anti-Imperialist noises at all the right noises – the Egyptian crisis, the Gallipoli adventure, the Amritsar massacre, the British invasion of the Soviet Republic. Iain Wright, "Rival Cosmogonies," typescript, 1993, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Trivedi 18.

<sup>17</sup> Trivedi 174-175.

a patently political posture. In any case, a belief such as Tagore's in the supremacy of individuals and personal relationships was not peculiar to himself. . . . E. M. Forster, similarly prioritized apparently apolitical personal relationships over a problematic political context in his *Passage to India* (1924).<sup>18</sup>

Forster displays this tendency to universalise and to not be historically and politically specific. For example, this inclination is also visible in his critical book, *Aspects of the Novel*, where he comments:

Time, all the way through, is to be our enemy. We are to visualize the English novelists . . . seated together in a room, a circular room, a sort of British Museum reading-room – all writing their novels simultaneously. They do not, as they sit there, think: 'I live under Queen Victoria, I under Anne. . . .' They are half mesmerized, their sorrows and joys are pouring through the ink, they are approximated by the act of creation. . . . That is to be our vision of them – an imperfect vision, but . . . it will preserve us from a serious danger, the danger of pseudo-scholarship.<sup>19</sup>

These views of Forster often result in the impression that he has no political and historical consciousness whatsoever. Although in some ways the tone of this Clark Lecture<sup>20</sup> is meant to be facetious, it suggests two important points. Firstly, Forster's capacity for self-scrutiny is implied in his realisation that this 'ahistorical' vision which he proposes is not perfect. Secondly this comment suggests his scepticism of the kind of scholarship that overly emphasizes history and politics in their narrow sense only.

Edward Said's brief critique of the novel is another example of a postcolonial reconstruction of *A Passage to India*. He is critical of the novel's soft stance on British

---

<sup>18</sup> Trivedi 81.

<sup>19</sup> E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 27.

<sup>20</sup> Forster was offered the Clark Lectureship (1926–7) by Trinity College, Cambridge and gave a series of eight lectures on English Literature.



colonialism and its apparent lack of support for Indian independence. Said evaluates the novel's politics in the following statement: "The novel's helplessness neither goes all the way and condemns (or defends) British colonialism, nor condemns or defends Indian nationalism."<sup>21</sup> In his much publicised book, *Orientalism*, he depicted *A Passage to India* as a participant in an Orientalist discourse which projected a humanism that claimed to be all-encompassing on the surface but was actually exclusively European/Western. Said argues that this textual attitude resulted in and supported European colonialism and the alleged superiority of the West.

Aijaz Ahmed, through a respectful and intelligent approach, deconstructs Said's deconstruction of Western canonical texts by arguing that he does not realise the contradictions of his own claims. Ahmed is sceptical about Said's main assertion where he criticises the exclusivity of the liberal humanism of canonical texts uses similar humanist/universalist values. In Ahmed's words: "What is remarkable about this at times very resounding affirmation of humanist value is that humanism-as-ideality is invoked precisely at the time when humanism-as-history has been rejected so *unequivocally*."<sup>22</sup> (164; emphasis added). This thesis believes that the postcolonial practice of rereading canonical texts needs to take into account this equivocacy, that Ahmed has highlighted, which is inevitable for critics themselves and is possibly present in individual texts. While Said sees Forster's politics in terms of either/or, the novel displays a more complex awareness of the political/historical realities of British colonialism and Indian nationalism. It is not uncommon to interpret Forster in a reductive way, as Elizabeth Langland explains: "E.M. Forster is a difficult writer to approach because he appears simple politically."<sup>23</sup> Said disempowers the novel's politics instead of seeing its political ambiguity as a strength. The strength of this

---

<sup>21</sup> *Culture And Imperialism* 245.

<sup>22</sup> Ahmed 164.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Langland, "Gesturing Towards an Open Space: Gender, Form, and Language in E.M. Forster's *Howards End*," *Out Of Bounds*, eds. L. Claridge, and E. Langland (Amherst: Massachusetts UP, 1990) 252.

ambiguity is that although the novel deserves credit for its own capacities for deconstruction, it does not enact a complete deconstruction of its main humanist ideology which critics such as Trivedi have argued: "Forster [is seen] not as a person most avowedly apolitical—he does in this regard protest too much—but rather as a political creature with a difference, whose politics were so liberal and feckless as to seek—ineffectually, of course—even to erase themselves."<sup>24</sup>

Another example of a postcolonial critic accusing the novel of political/ethical weakness is Timothy Brennan who makes a sweeping statement about the attitude of canonical literature to imperialism in his book, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*. He says: "for the most part, the English criticism of Empire has been, until recently, almost all of one kind: the slightly ill-at-ease, slightly ashamed but enormously forgiving recognition of imperial themes in writers from 'the centre'. . . ." He implies that such novelists avoid the issue of colonial politics. He says the novelists instead prefer to focus, as Forster does, "on the possibilities of inter-cultural communication. . . ."<sup>25</sup> Brennan is viewing the novel's exploration of inter-cultural communication in narrow terms. The novel's representation of inter-cultural communication is political, because Forster explores how a concept such as cultural difference is used to reinforce or resist colonial discourse. Forster is sceptical of an alterity that has been communicated in an imperial way and he has tried to decentralise European experience.

These critics seek an overt expression of anticolonialism and a defence of Indian nationalism from Forster. What they do not consider is that there are other ways to express anticolonialism. Forster's approach to politics is different to the dogmatic and overt postcolonial critics. His concentration on the colonial experience is seen in the light of his wider sense of reality or politics. The novel is not confined to localized and

---

<sup>24</sup> Trivedi 21.

<sup>25</sup> Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989) 24.

specific themes, for it contains a perspective that perceives the reality of colonial politics through the personal and the metaphysical and separately.

One can be sceptical of this desire of Said's for overt political analyses in literature because they can be expressed in a less overt fashion. Forster certainly thinks they should be. Greg Denning is rightly sceptical about Said's desire for political overtness.<sup>26</sup> This thesis believes that literature and politics are connected in an important way; however, literature has its own way of expressing its political imagination. And this demand for being explicit neglects to see how metaphysical themes, rather than the political theme in the novel, are used to express a political message. Forster's metaphysics is, therefore, not a sign of his political impotency but its strength and sophistication.

In order to see the underlying connections that exist amongst the novel's personal and metaphysical and political themes, the method of reading is very important. Roger Ebbatson and Catherine Neale describe it aptly: "*A Passage to India* . . . requires the kind of close scrutiny which readers often reserve for the reading of poetry."<sup>27</sup> Trivedi's argument about Rabindranath Tagore's work could also be applied to Forster's; it is a pity that he fails to do so. He says: "in order to show that behind the apparently apolitical and poetic-spiritual works of his lay also a complex awareness of such explicitly political categories as nationalism, internationalism and imperialism."<sup>28</sup> If Trivedi had realised this, then the political significance of, for instance, the novel's 'metaphysics' would have been visible to him; for example, the descriptive silences, shifting to higher realms such as the 'over-arching sky', Indian nature, spiritual consciousness are a resonant reminder of India's resistance to British colonialism and her powerful existence in her own right.

---

<sup>26</sup> Greg Denning, "Disembodied Artifacts: Edward Said's *Culture And Imperialism*," *Scripta* 9.1 (1993) 82.

<sup>27</sup> Roger Ebbatson and Catherine Neale, *E.M. Forster: A Passage to India* (London: Penguin, 1989) 59.

<sup>28</sup> Trivedi 16.

Similarly, Said, not realising the multifariousness of Forster's text, interprets it in an unbalanced way. For example, he says: "Forster's India is so affectionately personal and so remorselessly metaphysical that his view of Indians as a nation contending for sovereignty with Britain is not politically very serious, or even respectful."<sup>29</sup> *A Passage to India* combines a philosophical and poetic style through which an ideology emerges that is, on the contrary, politically very serious and respectful in its anticolonialism. The novel's less overt expression of political views reflects the subtle nature of the views themselves and the subtle effect on people's consciousness. On the contrary, ironically, Orwell's *Burmese Days*, which is more, explicit in its political stance, was less effective, according to Sujit Mukherjee: "It is at places like this that *Burmese Days* reads less like a novel, more like a tract, and cannot easily achieve what *A Passage to India* did in terms of educating the reader back home."<sup>30</sup> Forster's style which includes an emphasis on attitudes and consciousness not action was noted by Rebecca West in 1924: "the average Englishman was used to regarding India with the pride of the possessor; it was desirable for his national prosperity that he should; but now he would rather understand it, and he is reading *A Passage to India* with avidity. It may be that this desire for understanding may result in an age of impotence. That has been the belief of the men of action in all ages."<sup>31</sup>

It is true that Forster does fall to some extent into the trap of romanticising India but also that he uses the metaphysical or spiritual turmoil of the characters in a covert manner to suggest the truth behind colonialism. It is through his desire to not colonise India by attributing reductive simplistic meanings to her, that he sees India in terms of the 'mysterious'. But Trivedi, similar to Said, interprets the 'mysterious' as simply metaphysical and not political at all: "Forster did in fact choose to write in such a period

---

<sup>29</sup> *Culture And Imperialism* 246.

<sup>30</sup> Sujit Mukherjee, *Forster And Further: The Tradition of Anglo-Indian Fiction* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1993) 39.

<sup>31</sup> Rebecca West, "Interpreters of their age," *Saturday Review of Literature* (New York), August 1924. Quoted in Philip Gardner, ed., *The Critical Heritage : E.M. Forster* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) 255.

a mysterious novel about mysterious India rather than a political novel about political India. . . .”<sup>32</sup> He adds: “Not that *Passage* . . . is not political. But it is only incidentally so and despite and not withstanding itself, apparently.”<sup>33</sup> Even despite Forster himself making such distinctions in the novel between the political, the spiritual, the personal; he had commented about the novel: “It’s about something wider than politics . . . about the universe as embodied in the Indian earth and sky. . . . It is – or rather desires to be – philosophic and poetic. . . .”<sup>34</sup>, they are deeply textured into one another. At the same time, this comment of his suggests that there is a side of him that rejects politics. Trivedi argues this point: “In an interview with Das, Forster repeatedly denied any interest in politics: ‘Never been very mush [sic] interested in politics . . . my own trend is not political.’”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the personal, the political and the spiritual do not always intertwine harmoniously. Sometimes the personal and spiritual clash with the political. This disharmony which suggests the novel’s internal tension is more realistic than the harmony and consistency that the postcolonialists desire as proof of the novel’s anti-colonialism. The novel’s awareness of a “great deal of things” is expressed in a coexistence of harmony and disharmony which displays the novel’s ambiguity .

In order to see Forster’s politics as a whole and to not falsely reconstruct them it is helpful to look at his other works. We do not have to accept a postmodern sense of the single text and get rid of the author’s intentions which sometimes vary from or reinforce those expressed in his other works, when so much of the negative criticism stamps a false image on the author in general and not simply on his one novel. While this thesis is primarily a study of *A Passage to India*, its main defence being the text’s capacity for self-deconstruction<sup>36</sup>, its argument is also reinforced by external

---

<sup>32</sup> Trivedi 194-195.

<sup>33</sup> Trivedi 195.

<sup>34</sup> Oliver Stallybrass, introduction, *A Passage to India* (London: Penguin Group, 1989) 25.

<sup>35</sup> Trivedi 184.

<sup>36</sup> Forster’s self-deconstruction reflects simultaneously, faith and scepticism in his liberal humanist ideology.

evidence<sup>37</sup>, that is, reference to Forster's other fiction and writing. It sees this as crucial in order to understand and render more adequately his political and cultural awareness, irony as well as his faith in liberal humanism. The thesis makes cross-references to Forster's novel *Howards End* (1910) and his books of essays: *Abinger Harvest* and *Two Cheers for Democracy*. These writings make his interest in explicit political issues, such as fascism, imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, as well as a development of the scepticism of his own politics more visible. Even looking back further than *Howards End*, to Forster's previous novels, *Where Angels Fear To Tread* (1905) and *A Room With A View* (1908), it is possible to see how they reflect his interest in the racial/cultural 'other'.<sup>38</sup>

The question of political awareness is the level at which this thesis analyses the text: its ambiguities, its ambivalences and its many sided complexities and contradictions. Most postcolonial discourses treat politics as separate from the land, race, culture and the spiritual identity of a society. In that sense Forster is far more subtle than many other writers on India, including Indian novelists.

---

<sup>37</sup> External to the text not Forster's consciousness, although time differences have to be acknowledged.

<sup>38</sup> In *A Room With a View* and *Where Angels Fear To Tread* Forster deals with the Italian 'other'. *A Passage to India*, however, shows a development in Forster's thinking about the political construct of 'the other'. He has shown his interest in India in his book, *The Hill of Devi* and in some reviews on the various subjects of Indian art, sculpture, architecture and religion, such as: "Erotic Indian Sculpture," rev. of *Kama Kala*, by Mulk Anand Raj, *The Listener* 12 March. 1959: 469-471; "The World Mountain," rev. of *The Art of India*, by Stella Kramrisch, *The Listener* 2 Dec. 1954: 977-978; "The Art and Architecture of India," broadcast talk on *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, by Benjamin Rowland, *The Listener* 10 Sept. 1953: 419-421.

## *Chapter One*

### **British Colonialism**

#### **Introduction**

Orientalist, class and sexual politics are visible in Forster's criticism of Empire, particularly in *A Passage to India*. On the one hand, his critique shows that the Empire perpetuated a discourse on certain forms of human concepts, such as truth, justice, morality and civilization which served its colonial interests. Although the concepts were assumed to be universal and inclusive, they were in reality imperial and exclusive and denoted a certain race, class and gender perspective, namely Anglo-Saxon, middle class and male. On the other hand, Forster's anti-imperial critique is made questionable by its own internal politics. For example, while attempting to incorporate an Indian perspective which counteracts Anglocentric perspectives and negative stereotypes of India and Indians, this 'Indian perspective' sometimes reflects an orientalist discourse. In order to critique the participation of the English middle class in colonialism, middle class values are still being used. Forster's critique of Empire explores the participation of the English women in the colonial discourse, and perhaps it attributes unfair responsibility to their role in colonialism. Therefore, the analysis of Forster's critique of Empire in this thesis acknowledges its ambiguity. Contemporary critics usually fail to do this and their arguments reinforce those of many critics of the past who also have not adequately perceived the political significance of Forster's writing, and have drained the novel of its imperial, racial and sexual politics. They have tended to concentrate on liberal humanism as an apolitical discourse and that is why Forster's anti-imperial critique is so easily dismissed by critics today.

Recent critics are sceptical of the angle from which Forster bases his imperial critique. His critique is based upon a character analysis of England's middle class and

this they believe ignores the basic reality of imperialism which according to them is material not spiritual/psychological (Marxists think that middle class capitalism is behind imperialism). D.S. Savage writes about *A Passage to India*: "The ugly realities underlying the presence of the British in India are not even glanced at and the issues raised are handled as though they could be solved on the surface level of personal intercourse and individual behaviour."<sup>1</sup> The critic Benita Parry further articulates what Savage identifies as being excluded from the novel: "What is absent is a consciousness of imperialism as capitalism's expansionist, conquering moment. . . ."<sup>2</sup> It is true that Forster has placed a strong emphasis in *A Passage to India* on critiquing imperialism through character analysis. At the same time, the novel suggests the material drive of imperialism on the fringes of its main narrative. The Empire's theft of India's possessions is suggested obliquely through a minor character, Miss Derek, who is constantly disappearing with her Indian employer's expensive possessions. Also, the main Indian character, Aziz, at one point displays his bitterness about the money he believes that Fielding and Adela have stolen from him and he makes the analogy of Britain having stolen so much of India's wealth. Furthermore, this consciousness is not completely absent from Forster's general awareness of imperial exploitation. It is, for example, present in *Howards End*. Also, outside his novel writing, Forster spoke strongly against the economic exploitation taking place in Egypt as a result of British colonialism.<sup>3</sup> Forster was too realistic to think that the growth of the Empire could be explained by focusing on the psychology of the colonisers, although in *A Passage to India* this was his main focus.

---

<sup>1</sup> D. S. Savage quoted in Ebbatson, and Neale, *E.M. Forster: A Passage To India* 108.

<sup>2</sup> Parry, "The Politics of Representation in *A Passage to India*" 29.

<sup>3</sup> After his return from Egypt in 1919 where he had encountered a more brutally direct and exploitative form of economic Imperialism than anything he had seen in India, he published letters in the *Manchester Guardian* and in the *Times* – protesting about the British Government's treatment of the fellahin and denouncing "the forced labour system in the Labour Corps". Iain Wright, "Rival Cosmogonies", typescript, 1993, 12.



There have been many critiques of imperialism which have given importance to the material aspect of colonialism. Savage's criticism fails to see that the 'ugly realities' of British colonialism in India can also be contained in attitudes. Ironically<sup>4</sup> it is Said who emphasizes the equal importance of attitudes that enabled Britain to maintain her power in India. He argues that British colonisers were not only able to justify themselves through trade alone but also through their alleged superiority. Said re-establishes this aspect as a strong basis for critique. He comments:

The will, self-confidence, even arrogance necessary to maintain such a state of affairs can only be guessed at, but, as we shall see in the texts of *A Passage to India* and *Kim*, these attitudes are at least as significant as the number of people in the army or civil service, or the millions of pounds England derived from India.<sup>5</sup>

However, Forster's particular critique of attitudes and behaviour in the colonial situation has been depoliticised. This is partly a result of critics often having argued that Forster suggested in *A Passage to India* that reconciliation through personal intercourse and individual behaviour were the solution to colonialism. He was in fact more subtle than this assertion would suggest. For one thing he did not see that the individual or personal realm was itself exempt from colonial attitudes. He knew that colonial behaviour and attitudes were visible in the exchanges between people both on official and personal levels. Furthermore, the novel is not about resolutions, which it sees as being false and authoritative nor does it wish to be authoritative about its own discourse. No longer is resolution a feasible prospect in *A Passage to India* as it was in *Howards End*. Alfred Kazin comments about the *Howards End* novel: "the book ends in a vision of perfect peace right at the old house in Hertfordshire, Howards End, that is the great symbol throughout the book of stability in ancestral, unconscious wisdom."<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Irony because Said seems to miss out on or not give *A Passage to India* credit for its awareness of covert colonial attitudes, which is basically Said's own mission as concerns colonial canonical novels, that is, to expose their covert attitudes.

<sup>5</sup> *Culture And Imperialism* 10.

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Kazin, "Howards End Revisited," *Partisan Review* 59.129 (1992): 30.

On the contrary, the Marabar Caves in *A Passage to India* are a symbol of instability. Although it is not convincing that the various elements of tension have been resolved in *Howards End*, the novel ends with a resolution. However, *A Passage to India* deals with possibilities of resolutions. Forster believed that in the interstices of situations of chaos, force and violence, personal intercourse and individual behaviour were possible. He hoped for this kind of order in the midst of chaos: “personal relationships. Here is something comparatively solid in a world full of violence and cruelty.”<sup>7</sup> The novel advocates moments of connection between individuals and sees these as little triumphs. Forster personally found that friendship and trust between two people on different racial and political sides was indeed possible in Egypt. He believed that it is what his Egyptian friend wanted too. Forster says in one of his essays that for the oriental the personal relationship is the most important thing.<sup>8</sup> Either Forster orientalises the other by projecting his own desires on to him or he is not treating him as other in the first place by acknowledging his (Egyptian friend’s) human desire for friendship as well. Furthermore, personal relations should not necessarily be depoliticised. Some critics see Forster’s concentration on friendship between the ‘coloniser’ and ‘colonised’ as escapist. But Forster is making the significant point that the possibility of friendship suggests a more positive attitude of which the imperialists were incapable. The colonialists had difficulty with being personal and individual to the Indians, they were only capable of relating to them on an official level. In Forster’s thinking the liberal humanist way of behaving can connect people of different races, cultures and classes and this is a form of resistance to colonialism.

Furthermore, the kind of claim made by Savage has led to the stereotype of Forster as someone critiquing colonialism merely from a middle class and bourgeois perspective. Such comments as the following delimit his political consciousness: “It has been suggested that Forster hated imperial domineering but had no specific quarrel with

---

<sup>7</sup> “What I Believe” [first published 1938], *Two Cheers* 65.

<sup>8</sup> “Salute to the Orient!” [first published 1932], *Abinger Harvest* 261.

imperial domination.”<sup>9</sup> Lionel Trilling reinforces this idea: “*A Passage to India* is not a radical novel . . . it is not concerned to show that the English should not be in India at all.”<sup>10</sup> These views suggest that although Forster condemns the behaviour of the British, he accepts their right to be in India in the first place. Critics eagerly pounce on comments made by Forster himself which in a sense encourage this point of view, such as when Ebbatson notes Forster’s observation that: “never in history did ill-breeding contribute so much towards the dissolution of an Empire.”<sup>11</sup> His use of the word ‘ill-breeding’ again suggests a middle-class bourgeois tone. Yet, Forster’s emphasis on ‘ill-breeding’ and ‘imperial domineering’ questions the behaviour of the colonialists and colonial assumptions such as Britain thinking she is the centre of civilization. Furthermore, he was concerned about the destruction that Britain’s imperial domination was causing in Egypt and he wrote a pamphlet against their occupation. *The Government Of Egypt* recommended Egypt be granted her autonomy or dominion status at her consent.<sup>12</sup> Savage’s kind of argument presents a limited picture of Forster’s concern for politics and more specifically imperial domination.

Such a way of reading Forster depoliticised an underlying fundamental rejection of power and domination. For example, Elizabeth Langland notes this in *Howards End*: “A deep suspicion of conquest in its most notable manifestations—imperialism and war—lies at the very heart of *Howards End*.”<sup>13</sup> Forster’s criticism of the Empire contains an abiding irony about monolithic faiths, be they religious, cultural or political, which lead to domination. Forster offers a vision of an aristocracy or elect to counteract the ideology of conquest in its many forms. Also, his use of words like ‘aristocracy’ and

---

<sup>9</sup> Ebbatson and, Neale, *E.M. Forster: A Passage to India* 107.

<sup>10</sup> Lionel Trilling, *E.M. Forster* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959) 129.

<sup>11</sup> Ebbatson and Neale 107.

<sup>12</sup> E. M. Forster, *The Government Of Egypt: Recommendations . . . With Notes On Egypt* (London: Labour Research Department. International Section, 1921) 1-12.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Langland, “Gesturing Towards An Open Space: Gender, Form, and Language in E.M. Forster’s *Howards End*” 261.

‘elect’ is ironic as he emphasizes that these categories are on the contrary not based upon power. He writes: “On they go—an invincible army, yet not a victorious one . . . their temple . . . is the holiness of the Heart’s affections, and their kingdom, though they never possess it, is the wide-open world.”<sup>14</sup>

Forster’s anti-imperial critique centers upon an analysis of the English national character, which, on the contrary, was according to him, narrow minded and conservative: “Lack of imagination, hypocrisy. These qualities characterize the middle classes in every country, but in England they are national characteristics also. . . .”<sup>15</sup> Outside *A Passage to India*, Forster had already displayed his interest in critiquing the English character in an essay entitled ‘Notes on the English character’. However, Forster is not saying that the English middle class essentially possessed these qualities but rather he is suggesting that the national character is shaped by a limited English institution – the public-school system. A corresponding picture of these limitations is displayed in the novel through a parody of Anglo-India. The novel mocks Anglo-India’s assertion of cultural and national identity in all its insularity and provincialism. It used the national anthem, sardines and pea soup and fifth-form prayers, to protect itself from the outside ‘hostile’ world of India. Forster and liberals like him rejected this parochialism and felt it would be a meagre destiny for England to remain so Anglocentric.

Forster is critical of this ideology of the public-school system which develops into a harmful national ethos: “when they were taught that school is the world in miniature, and believed that no one can love his country who does not love his school.”<sup>16</sup> The public-school system produces a “mindless imperialism”, such as that of Kipling. <sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> “What I Believe,” *Two Cheers* 71.

<sup>15</sup> “Notes on the English Character” [first published 1920], *Abinger Harvest* 3.

<sup>16</sup> “Notes on the English Character,” *Abinger Harvest* 4.

<sup>17</sup> Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination* 133.

Forster not only claimed that Kipling was a product of the public-school system but also that he never grew out of that training. The outcome of such an ideology was that imperialists like Kipling perceived that different races and cultures were inferior and therefore should be dominated. Kipling says about middle-class public-school men:

And they go forth into a world that is not entirely composed of public-school men or even Anglo-Saxons, but of men who are as various as the sands of the sea; into a world of whose richness and subtlety they have no conception. They go forth into it with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts. And it is this undeveloped heart that is largely responsible for the difficulties of Englishmen abroad. An undeveloped heart—not a cold one.<sup>18</sup>

This metaphor of the ‘undeveloped heart’ which is very prevalent in Forster’s fiction is used in a more sophisticated political/spiritual sense in *A Passage to India*. It does not merely mean an inability to have personal relations. It stands for those Englishmen and women who failed to see and appreciate the variety and complexity of humanity and life – made up of different cultures, races – and who are not inferior but different and equal (and sometimes Forster thought ‘superior’). Forster is capable of seeing the world in a wider sense than that of the imperial imagination which reconstructs the world according to a public-school ideological point of view and ultimately justifies the Empire’s presence in India.

---

<sup>18</sup> “Notes on the English Character,” *Abinger Harvest* 4-5.

## Part One

The novel conveys its anti-imperial critique through a character analysis of the attitudes and mentality of the colonial administrators of the British Empire in India. For example, Ronny Heaslop is a representative of an official who embodies the imperial ideal of the 'White Man's Burden' in his job as Chandrapore's City Magistrate. In the capacity of an administrator of law he believes that it is his duty to work in India to impose order onto her chaos. The White Man's Burden is a form of conquest because those who adhere to it, falsely believe that they have a duty to impose superior Western concepts of humanity, civilization, morality, ethics and justice onto other nations. The novel is sceptical about this notion because it does not believe that Britain has all the answers to the problems of the world. This is particularly the case when we take into account that India has its own kinds of domination and variations to these concepts, that is, Indians have their own forms of civilization, morality, order, and harmony and therefore they are capable of arriving at solutions of their own. But it is also necessary to deconstruct the Indian alternatives that the novel offers. The White Man's Burden is itself a concept which was invented for reasons other than the 'humane' desire to improve the world by 'civilising' it; although this belief is an important justification for the profit motive. Ronny is the kind of hero who is much popularized by Rudyard Kipling in his imperialist stories. Forster's narrative of Empire mocks this concept through its anti-heroic discourse. The novel shows that the heroism of the colonial administrators is a result of their moral blindness and a foolish belief that any discourse or institution could control India. While heroism is based on the belief in permanency, the novel frequently suggests the instability of Empire. This instability of Empire is also suggested by the novel's exploration of the hypocrisy and self-deception that underlies the assumptions of the White Man's Burden where an adherence to duty reveals career and class interests.

"England holds India for her own good" (124) is typical rhetoric of the White Man's Burden which justifies the British presence in India. However, Forster shows his

subversiveness by giving voice to an Indian scepticism of Britain's right to rule India. Hamidullah, questioning the alleged moral superiority of the Empire, asks Fielding: "Excuse the question, but if this is the case [morality declines], how is England justified in holding India?" (124). Furthermore, Ronny perceives his job in terms of this ideal of the White Man's Burden but the novel suggests its scepticism. The assumption of the colonial authority's claim to the truth is deconstructed by the narrator's ironic perspective on 'Indian immorality', 'British justice' and furthermore it suggests a lack of control of 'India's complexity' more than anything in the following passage:

He spoke sincerely. Every day he worked hard in the court trying to decide which of two true accounts was the less untrue, trying to dispense justice fearlessly, to protect the weak against the less weak, the incoherent against the plausible, surrounded by lies and flattery. That morning he had convicted a railway clerk of overcharging pilgrims for their tickets, and a Pathan of attempted rape. He expected no gratitude, no recognition for this, and both clerk and Pathan might appeal, bribe their witnesses more effectually in the interval, and get their sentences reversed. (69-70)

The novel is saying that India is too complex to be dealt with so confidently and complacently. It is sceptical because Ronny is trying to control a world that is not his own. This is suggested in his perception of the Indians as 'incoherent'. Furthermore, the novel is ironic about Ronny setting himself up as an authority of truth and justice. He believed that he was supplying English justice to counteract the Indians' oppression of each other through crimes and lies, but in fact he is part of a system which enacts a greater oppression of Indians themselves. The lie of Empire is a much bigger one. Forster however suggests that this hypocrisy is not derived from 'intentional deceit'. Forster believes that Ronny is sincere, but suffers from a 'muddleheadedness' (as I will explain later). India does have its problems but Ronny sees Indians only in terms of their weakness and corruption. Ronny's thoughts suggest a colonial narrative in which the Indians are portrayed as being inferior and in need of the British to rule them. In the passage quoted above no perspective is given of the Indians themselves. They are seen

as being incoherent criminals, liars, and flatterers. Although at this point Ronny is referring to Indian criminals, this view of Indians resonates in his and other colonialists' minds about Indians in general.

The novel, however, undermines the colonial narrative by suggesting the reality of different concepts of truth. Fielding diverges from the imperial norm and experiences an Indian concept of truth. For example, he does not go by the imperial truth that all Indians are liars. He is more in touch with the Indian because he has been more willing to allow his idea of truth to be altered: "Ronny would have pulled him [Aziz] up . . . he [Fielding] had dulled his craving for verbal truth and cared chiefly for truth of mood" (88). Although the novel tries to show how the colonialists go wrong when they judge a different race and culture according to their own cultural and racial superiority and political goals, the danger lies in its expression of a different way of being. Does the novel fall into an orientalist trap in its desire to show the limitations of colonial truths? It seems to create a colonial discourse itself. For example, when Aziz tells Fielding about having been with Adela when she decided to go away with Miss Derek, although in fact he had lost Adela in one of the caves and not seen her after that; the narrator explains why he 'lied': "Incurably inaccurate, he [Aziz] already thought that this was what had occurred. He was inaccurate because he was sensitive. . . . He was inaccurate because he desired to honour her. . ." (168). Verbal truth can be taken at face value. This tendency to reason and interpret things in this way is why the colonialists are unable to penetrate any deeper into the psyche of Indians or India; whereas the novel has given an explanation for Aziz's 'inaccuracy' which should be interpreted according to the Indian convention of 'hospitality'. However, in the characterisation of the Indian preference for 'truth of mood', they emerge as overly-emotional, indulgent and weak. A stereotype of the irrationality of Indians is still being perpetuated to an extent.

The novel also deconstructs 'British justice' in the colonial situation. The Indians are sceptical of British justice. In their mode of expression they refer to what is wrong with British justice in terms of 'coldness'. This is not simply an orientalising of Indians



and their emotionalism but it also represents the privileging of Forster's liberal humanist values. The Indian lack of connection with cold British justice and need for love signifies for them an absence of a political attitude of respect for their country and people. This is true of the colonialists who hold power although it is present in the powerless (like Mrs Moore). The institutional manifestation of this attitude is the British court system in India which is unfair to the Indians. Said commenting on the trial scene, indicates what 'British justice' amounted to in reality: "Part of the extraordinary novelty of Aziz's trial in *A Passage to India* is that Forster admits that 'the flimsy framework of the court' cannot be sustained because it is a 'fantasy' that compromises British power (real) with impartial justice for Indians (unreal)."<sup>19</sup> Another example of the hypocrisy of British justice is displayed in Mahmoud Ali's comment: "When we poor blacks take bribes, we perform what we are bribed to perform, and the law discovers us in consequence. The English take and do nothing. I admire them" (34). He realises that because the English are law in India, when Indians bribe they are punished for it, whereas when the English do the same thing they escape under the false label of 'British civilisation'.

At the same time, the Indians (Aziz, Hamidullah) reject Adela's sacrifice, as she showed no love for the people she had wronged. The novel conveys this different concept of justice in a way which seems to fix it in an orientalist discourse:

For her behaviour rested on cold justice and honesty; she had felt, while she recanted, no passion of love for those whom she had wronged. Truth is not truth in that exacting land unless there go with it kindness and more kindness and kindness again, unless the Word that was with God also is God. (245)

This explanation by the narrator suggests that truth in India is connected to morality. On the contrary, when Adela states the truth "in hard prosaic tones" and thinks: "Atonement and confession – they could wait" (232) this displays the novel's deliberate

---

<sup>19</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 89.

creation of an antithesis in which there is an absence of any moral consideration on her part. That is why the Indians are so appreciative of Mrs Moore's attitude. Mahmoud Ali says: "She loved Aziz . . . also India, and he loved her." Fielding replies, "Love is of no value in a witness, as a barrister ought to know"(247). Fielding complains that Aziz is not being fair to Adela and being overly gracious to Mrs Moore, who according to Fielding, did nothing for him. However, his reconstruction of the truth while logical in its adherence to evidence is all the same limited. In contrast, the novel conveys the point of view of an Indian character yet his perspective is not complete either because it is also selective. Mahmoud Ali expresses his realisation of the falsity of British justice but still the novel is partially ironic about his emotional exhibition. For, in fact, Mrs Moore had not been willing to help but, at the same time, she supported them in spirit: "She was kept from us until too late – I learn too late – this is English justice, here is your British Raj. Give us back Mrs Moore for five minutes only. . ." (226–227). Mahmoud Ali acts irrationally and emotionally by leaving the court, but like the crowd's chanting of Mrs Moore's name as a symbol of justice, this is a form of resistance, which conveys a different mode of expression though perhaps it is, in some ways, trapped in an orientalist discourse. Mahmoud Ali 'emotionally' says: "I ruin my career, no matter; we are all to be ruined one by one" (227). He is willing to give up his career unlike the colonialists who hold on to their careers at any cost in order to make the penetrating point that: "I am not defending a case, nor are you trying one. We are both of us, slaves" (227). Mahmoud Ali's action, that is, his walking out of the court in the middle of defending Aziz, is a challenge to 'British justice', although at this stage it proves to be ineffective in its challenge. For it is not a logical and rational way to behave and seems to reflect an orientalist discourse as it is a characteristically weak, emotional and seen as the Indian way to behave.

*A Passage to India* contains an ironic awareness of the colonialists either playing God themselves or representing God as sanctioning British rule. When Ronny asserts: "We're out here to do justice and keep the peace. Them's my sentiments. India isn't a drawing-room" (69). Mrs Moore sensing her son's unfailing self-assurance, replies:

“Your sentiments are those of a god”. While the novel uses Mrs Moore to critique the colonial attitudes of Ronny she perpetuates a similar discourse. It may be in the guise of a greater benevolence but it is also an unconscious justification of imperialism: “God has put us on earth to love our neighbours and to show it, and He is omnipresent, even in India, to see how we are succeeding” (70). Outside the text as well, Forster critiqued the attitude that Britain has a duty to look after the other nations of the world. He associated English imperialism with German fascism, although, hypocritically, England saw Germany as the enemy to civilisation because of her desire to expand her boundaries. In *Howards End* Margaret’s German father draws the parallel: “your Pan-Germanism is no more imaginative than is our Imperialism over here.”<sup>20</sup> Both Germany and England perceived themselves to be the centre of civilization and, therefore, had a right to rule the world, but Forster mocks this belief: “The haughty nephew . . . bringing with him an even haughtier wife, [were] both convinced that Germany was appointed by God to govern the world. Aunt Juley would come next day, convinced that Great Britain had been appointed to the same post by the same authority.”<sup>21</sup> The novel then uses Margaret (when she is only a little girl) to subvert the illusion of such claims of superiority, in its characteristic witty way: “why will they not discuss this most clear question?”<sup>22</sup> “To me one of two things is very clear: either God does not know his own mind about England and Germany, or these do not know the mind of God.”<sup>23</sup>

Adela, an English visitor to India, is forced to question the arrogance of this attitude of the colonialists in the courtroom when her gaze focuses on the simple punkahwallah. His otherness provides her with a degree of detachment and she questions their solipsism and their middle class complacency in its acceptance of this attitude:

---

<sup>20</sup> *Howards End* 29.

<sup>21</sup> *Howards End* 30.

<sup>22</sup> *Howards End* 30.

<sup>23</sup> *Howards End* 30.

Something in his aloofness impressed the girl from middle-class England, and rebuked the narrowness of her sufferings. In virtue of what had she collected this roomful of people together? Her particular brand of opinions, and the suburban Jehovah who sanctified them – by what right did they claim so much importance in the world, and assume the title of civilization? (221)

Forster critiques monolithic faiths like Christianity and Western humanism in which individual suffering, one of its main bulwarks, has no consequence to the universe according to the character Godbole. Furthermore, Forster sees civilization being located in a society which is at peace and not in a heroic mode. Also, the novel suggests that aspects of the Indian civilization are not so easily corrupted by conquest:

Civilization strays about like a ghost here, revisiting the ruins of empire, and it is to be found not in great works of art or mighty deeds, but in the gestures well-bred Indians make when they sit or lie down. . . . This restfulness of gesture – it is the Peace that passeth Understanding. . . . When the whirling of action ceases, it becomes visible, and reveals a civilization which the West can disturb but will never acquire. (250–251)

Forster sees in imperialism an absence of real culture and civilization. He believes that civilisation is located in human acts of creativity and friendship amongst people of all races and classes: “So that is what I feel about force and violence. It is, alas! the ultimate reality on this earth, but it does not always get to the front. Some people call its absences ‘decadence’; I call them ‘civilization’ and find in such interludes the chief justification for the human experiment.”<sup>24</sup>

Forster’s attempts to symbolize India’s resistance to conquest in the punkahwallah and the gestures of well-bred Moslems. It is problematic that the punkahwallah only makes sense in terms of the function that Adela’s middle-class gaze gives to him. The novel shows that while she upholds him as a figure of truth beyond colonial truth, his

---

<sup>24</sup> “What I Believe,” *Two Cheers* 68.

reality is that he will end up on the garbage heap. Is Forster being orientalist in his representation of the subaltern as signifying a fixed and unchanging India?<sup>25</sup> The novel is aware of the problem of making its own narrative the center while the punkahwallah's narrative remains on the fringes. In other words, the novel's solipsism is visible in its use of the punkahwallah for the purposes of Adela acquiring more self-knowledge about her race and class.

The character Mrs Moore, another English visitor to India, is used to defend the novel's anti-imperial perspective. However, her 'politics of the heart' is a helpless alternative in some ways to Ronny's colonialism. While she questions Ronny's unthinking attitude, her own middle class complacency is later confronted. She questions Ronny's views on India's problems and the duty of the British to solve it, intuitively feeling that his sense of reality is incomplete. Observing her son, she feels illogically:

His words without his voice might have impressed her, but when she heard the self-satisfied lilt of them, when she saw the mouth moving so complacently and competently beneath the little red nose, she felt, quite illogically, that this was not the last word on India. One touch of regret – not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart – would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution. (70)

Her ability to perceive that this is not the last word on India can be attributed to a feminine sense which disrupts the patriarchal colonial narrative on the fringes. However, Benita Parry says that "the overt criticism of colonialism is phrased in the feeblest of terms. . . ." <sup>26</sup> Parry sees this as the novel's evasion but this is also a typical example of the subtlety of the text, where the author does not always exert his authority by appropriating the character's voice. These thoughts seem characteristic of Mrs

---

<sup>25</sup> Jenny Sharpe, "The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency," *Genders* 10 (1991): 150.

<sup>26</sup> Parry, "The Politics of Representation" 28.

Moore and her developed Christian heart. At the same time, it is difficult to deny that Mrs Moore speaks for the author to some extent. One cannot dismiss her altogether as Ronny does for being old and religious, yet at the same time, the novel is sceptical of this kind of idealism.

Mrs Moore is able to sense that there is something disturbing about the contradictions Ronny displays in justifying the imperial enterprise. By suggesting the contradictions and hypocritical thinking of the colonialists about their civilizing mission, the novel attempts to undermine colonial truths. For example, this hypocrisy is visible in Ronny's comment: "Lose such power as I have for doing good in this country, because my behaviour isn't pleasant?" (69). Even he is not quite comfortable with this statement and tries to justify his position by bringing up his allegiance to his class: "Go against my class, against all the people I respect and admire out here?" (69). This immediately undermines Ronny's assumption that he will use his power for the best interests of the Indians. For how can you do good in a country if you are not pleasant to the people that you are supposed to be doing good for. Yet even this idea of being 'pleasant' is deconstructed; it suggests that beneath the superficial reality lies repression and violence. Even Mrs Moore is unaware of this; there are limitations to her discourse: "the desire to behave pleasantly satisfies God. . . . The sincere if impotent desire wins his blessing" (70). How does that help the Indians? Furthermore, Forster deconstructs this colonial idea of doing 'good' by virtue of his own practices, such as when he gave 'unmotivated' affection as an individual to individual Indians in the colonial situation.

For Forster the hypocrisy of the colonialists has to do with their lack of self-awareness rather than intentional evil:

Do we mean *unconscious* deceit? Muddleheadedness? Of this I believe them to be guilty. When an Englishman has been led into a course of wrong action, he has nearly always begun by muddling himself. A public-school education does not make for

mental clearness, and he possesses to a very high degree the power of confusing his own mind.<sup>27</sup>

Margaret in *Howards End* says to the imperialist Mr Wilcox, “No one has ever told what you are – muddled, criminally muddled.”<sup>28</sup> For Margaret to use the adverb ‘criminally’ is to place this muddle under ethical scrutiny and in the public arena. Mr Wilcox’s muddleheadedness does not only affect others on a personal level as with his hypocritical reaction to Helen (he will not allow her to stay in Howards End at Margaret’s request because she is pregnant and this would not be appropriate according to him, although he himself is guilty of having an affair while he was married to his first wife) but refers to his involvement in an imperialist enterprise and indirect callousness towards Leonard Bast, who is a representative of a lower class (Henry advises Helen that the Company Leonard is working for is not stable and that he should change, when Leonard acts upon Helen’s information which turns out to be erroneous – the consequences are disastrous – Bast is poorer than he was at first and although Helen feels guilty, Henry will accept no responsibility at all). Henry Wilcox’s capitalism oppresses both the colonised and the poor.

The imperialist, like Mr Wilcox, is unable to change because he is blind to his hypocrisy. Similarly *A Passage to India* suggests that there can be no true regret or change of mentality when one’s behaviour is based upon the myopia of “the European Club [which] is the spiritual citadel, the real seat of power. . . ” (339). Ronny is only able to see the muddle of India that he encounters in his job but not the internal muddle in himself as a result of his undeveloped heart. The novel deconstructs colonial concepts of ‘mystery’ and ‘muddle’ by suggesting that they are symbolic of the imperialists’ inability to see the truth about their involvement in an insane, unstable enterprise. In *Howards End*, the liberal humanist character, Helen, perceives this very blindness of the colonialists:

---

<sup>27</sup> “Notes On The English Character,” *Abinger Harvest* 11.

<sup>28</sup> *Howards End* 287.

We are all in the mist – I know, but I can help you this far – men like the Wilcoxes are deeper in the mist than any. Sane, sound Englishmen! building empires, levelling all the world into what they call common sense. But mention Death to them and they're offended, because Death's really Imperial, and He cries out against them for ever.<sup>29</sup>

Forster is attempting to suggest the mortality of the Empire through the humanist belief that “mankind finds that it has subjected itself to the most severe of all metaphysics, that life is under the command of death, that mortality rules.”<sup>30</sup> Both *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* suggest that the colonialists' belief that the imperial authority of the Empire is permanent is an illusion.

D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, referring to Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, argues that he displays “an uneasy consciousness in him of unsatisfactory features even in British imperialism and in their attempted vindication an unconscious hypocrisy.”<sup>31</sup> He proceeds to quote Forster's description of ‘hypocrisy’ as the national trait of the British. In *A Passage to India*, Ronny is the imperialist who is portrayed as having more of a conscience than any of the others. For example, when Adela says to him that perhaps she had made a mistake and Aziz was not guilty, Ronny's uneasiness about this possibility is expressed in the following narrative comment: “A shiver like impending death passed over Ronny” (208). This is an example of the novel's prophetic sense of the death of the Empire. Ronny's myopia and guilt in his political life is mirrored by his personal life: “Ronny reminded himself that his mother had left India at her own wish, but his conscience was not clear. He had behaved badly to her, and he had either to repent (which involved a mental overturn), or to persist in unkindness towards her. He chose the latter course” (255–56). His inability to be kind to his mother corresponds

---

<sup>29</sup> *Howards End* 223.

<sup>30</sup> John Carroll, *Humanism: The Wreck of Western Culture* (London: Fontana Press, 1993): 5.

<sup>31</sup> D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, “Ironies of Progress: Joseph Conrad and Imperialism in Africa,” *Literature And Imperialism*, ed. Robert Giddings (London: The Macmillan Press, 1991): 80.



with his official attitude towards the natives. Ronny is not comfortable with his attitude to his mother but he has chosen to suppress his conscience. The imperialist Henry Wilcox in *Howards End* is of a similar type whose inability to be honest in the political sphere enters the personal realm. Helen labels such people as those who cannot say 'I'<sup>32</sup> In other words, those who are unable to be honest with themselves by seeing their own complicity. Critics accuse Forster of seeing colonialism in personal terms, but his point is that Mr Wilcox falsely attempts to disassociate himself from being personally responsible for contributing to the exploitation of the colonised and the poor. The novel's implication is that the Empire is built on dishonesty.

Mr McBryde, another colonial administrator, the Superintendent of Police, is unconsciously uncomfortable with hating Indians. He shows this when he attempts to justify his position and presence in India by believing that he is there for their benefit:

He replied in an odd, sad voice, 'I don't hate them, I don't know why,' and he didn't hate them; for if he did he would have to condemn his own career as a bad investment. He retained a contemptuous affection for the pawns he had moved about for so many years, they must be worth his pain. (217)

Forster shows that the need for self-justification within the imperialists' consciousness existed. That is, McBryde must have some positive feeling for the Indians if he is going to be able to justify his career. The colonialists have a personal investment in the Empire. They value their jobs, class and are not going to give these weapons of security up easily. The emphasis, however always seems to fall on the colonialists and not the Indians who are inhumanely being moved about like expendable pawns in a chess game. The novel's focus on the solipsism of the colonialists highlights the absence of an Indian perspective.

The novel undermines colonial truths about Indians by displaying contradictions in the alleged truths themselves. For example, the subaltern soldier has an experience of

---

<sup>32</sup> *Howards End* 218.

playing polo with an Indian and thus concludes that the sporting type of Indian is okay. He says to the Anglo-Indian group collected in the club after Aziz has been accused of rape: "You remember the one I had a knock with on your maidan last month. Well, he was all right. Any native who plays polo is all right. What you've got to stamp on is these educated classes. . ." (192). Ironically this Indian is Aziz, who is from the educated class that Ronny despises and whom the whole Anglo-Indian community hates after he has been accused of rape. The soldier is a participant, fueling the hatred with his extremist comments. The only acceptable Indian is the sporting type because he offers no resistance to their rule, whereas the colonialists dislike the educated and westernised Indian who does question it. A similar attitude is displayed by Mrs Turton: "Her manner had grown more distant since she had discovered that some of the group was westernized, and might apply her own standards to her" (62).

Similarly, reflecting this muddle-headedness of the colonialists, the novel deconstructs McBryde's truths about Indians and instead exposes them for the racist theories that they are in reality. For example, "Mr McBryde was shocked at his[Aziz's] downfall, but no Indian ever surprised him, because he had a theory about climatic zones. The theory ran: 'All unfortunate natives are criminals at heart, for the simple reason that they live south of latitude 30'"(175-176). This is a typically Eurocentric and racist comment; however, the novel ironically adds, "Born at Karachi, he seemed to contradict his theory, and would sometimes admit as much with a sad, quiet smile"(176). The novel's use of the word 'sad' is ironic for it is the sadness of someone who has already accepted these contradictions with a sense of inevitability rather than one who sees that his facts are undermined. The novel is aware that, in order to give authenticity to the colonial discourse, a useful colonial device is the appeal to science, logic and fact. For instance, this is visible in McBryde's thoughts: "Oriental Pathology, his favourite theme, lay all around him, and he could not resist it. Taking off his spectacles, as was his habit before enunciating a general truth, he looked into them sadly . . . not a matter for bitterness this, not a matter for abuse, but just a fact which any scientific observer will confirm" (222). The colonialists feel that there is no need to

justify to the Indians the moral superiority of the British: it remains a fact for them. For example: "He [McBryde] made no moral or emotional appeal, and it was only by degrees that the studied negligence of his manner made itself felt, and lashed part of the audience to fury" (221). There is a scepticism generally in the novel towards logic and fact when they are used for colonial purposes; that is, in order to suggest the inferiority of the Indian.

Furthermore, Ronny attempts to undermine Aziz. He says to Adela and his mother: "Aziz was exquisitely dressed, from tie-pin to spats, but he had forgotten his back collar-stud, and there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals the race" (97). The colonialists justify their rule by making these gross generalisations. This assertion shows no understanding of the Indian and his spontaneous generosity. The novel deconstructs this imperial 'truth' because the reader knows beforehand that Aziz had given his own collar-stud to Fielding who had damaged his own, in a gesture of goodwill and friendship.

The novel deconstructs 'British morality' by exposing its moral inconsistencies. McBryde truly is morally guilty, unlike the alleged immorality of Aziz. His hypocritical accusation of Aziz's immorality is exposed when his affair with Miss Derek is ironically revealed: "An avowed European scandal there was – Mr McBryde and Miss Derek. Miss Derek's faithful attachment to Chandrapore was now explained: Mr McBryde had been caught in her room, and his wife was divorcing him" (269). Furthermore, McBryde's prosecution of Aziz is symbolic of the British Empire's argument that India is not moral enough to rule itself and this acts as a justification for holding India. Therefore, exposure of McBryde's immorality is the novel's way of suggesting the immorality of the imperial enterprise. Forster deconstructs colonialism's civilizing mission by revealing how uncivilized and immoral the British can be. For example, the bestial look the novel attributes to McBryde when he looks in the table drawer from Aziz's bungalow: "McBryde . . . started rummaging in the drawer. His face became inquisitive and slightly bestial. 'Wife indeed, I know those wives!' he was

thinking” (180). McBryde’s attribution of immorality to Aziz and the slandering of Aziz’s wife is erroneous. Fielding winces because he knows that it is the same photograph of Aziz’s wife that Aziz honoured him with, by showing it to him on one occasion.

Yet, the novel acknowledges that the colonialists remain blind to themselves despite moments of doubt and therefore the Empire stands fairly solid. The novel cannot remain confident of deconstructing the imperial discourse because the reality is that it is very pervasive. Thus the novel enacts a further deconstruction by admitting that although the Marabar Caves undermines the Empire, its effect is minimal in the wider context: “The Marabar Caves had been a terrible strain on the local administration; they altered a good many lives and wrecked several careers, but they did not break up a continent or even dislocate a District” (238). This suggests that although there are elements of chaos in Indian society, and English disillusionment with Empire a new order has not arrived as yet. At this stage the Empire is almost a natural fact. The novel conveys this by reporting: “Although Sir Gilbert had been courteous, almost obsequious, the fabric he represented had in no wise bowed its head. British officialism remained, as all pervading and as unpleasant as the sun. . .” (258). Even after the Anglo-Indian community is proved to be wrong and Aziz innocent, its members continue persistently with their prejudices against Indians. It is not as if that little triumph really affected the fortress of the British Empire.

At the same time, the novel suggests reasons why the Empire will eventually collapse. It says that a lack of real control of India, the Empire’s wrong values and hollowness, will result in its eventual demise. In a very real sense the continued presence of the Empire is a symbol of Britain’s power in India. Yet, the novel is trying to show that at the same time the power of the colonialists in India is hollow. They have set themselves up as gods in a foreign land, perhaps attempting to wield a power they would not possess in England itself, but they are gods made of tin: “The Collector had watched the arrest from the interior of the waiting-room, and throwing open its

perforated doors of zinc he was now revealed like a god in a shrine" (172). India's nature is used by the novel to mock the colonialists' illusionary belief that they have really taken hold of India because in reality they neither understand or know her very well, as they have isolated themselves like "god[s] in a shrine". Parry has eloquently described the novel's counter discourse to the colonialists' sense of power: "the gestures of performance and force are countered by icons of restfulness and spiritual silence; the rhetoric of positivism, moral assurance and aggression is transgressed by the language of deferred hope, imponderables and quietism."<sup>33</sup> For example, the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is in some ways artificial. Ronny makes a display of his power and the Indians recognise this as a performance of power. Ronny is as ignorant of this as he is of their language. He does not bother learning the language of the other race and he feels it is not necessary because he is in power. This arrogance was characteristic of British officials in India. Said says that "Ronny Heaslop in Forster's *A Passage to India* is an effective portrait of such an official."<sup>34</sup> However, a sense of real power is missing and this is displayed in the servant's inaction and is reinforced by India's echoes:

Krishna was the peon who should have brought the files from his office. He had not turned up, and a terrific row ensued. Ronny stormed, shouted, howled, and only the experienced observer could tell that he was not angry, did not much want the files, and only made a row because it was the custom. Servants, quite understanding, ran slowly in circles, carrying hurricane lamps. Krishna the earth, Krishna the stars replied, until the Englishman was appeased by their echoes. . . . (111)

It is important to be aware of the nature of this kind of Indian resistance being represented in the novel. To some extent Said is rightly sceptical of this form of resistance. He suggests that Forster reinforces an orientalist discourse: "There are now

---

<sup>33</sup> Parry, "The Politics of Representation" 29.

<sup>34</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 183.

two sides, two nations, in combat, not merely the voice of the white master answered antiphonally – reactively – by the colonial upstart.”<sup>35</sup> However, Forster is more ironic than Said seems to realise. For example, when Aziz mocks Fielding’s power over him, the novel, although it cannot resist an orientalist remark, suggests Aziz’s awareness of the two sides: “Aziz sketched a comic salaam; like all Indians, he was skilful in the slighter impertinences. ‘I tremble, I obey’, the gesture said, and it was not lost upon Fielding” (296).

India’s nature reacts in a similarly mocking way when Ronny has finished asserting what the ‘real India’ is. The novel shifts to an undermining of a reconstruction of India which is based on exclusion and a desire for control: “The educated Indians will be no good to us if there’s a row. . . . Most of the people you see are seditious at heart, and rest’d run squealing. The cultivator – he’s another story. The Pathan – he’s a man if you like. But these people – don’t imagine they’re India” (59). But his bias is undermined by the impartiality of the sky which reflects a sense of India that one cannot draw rings around. India is mysterious and this is her power and resistance to being so easily contained as Ronny has attempted to contain her. The following passage displays India’s nature parodying colonialism and its positivism:

There was a silence when he had finished speaking, on both sides of the court; at least, more ladies joined the English group, but their words seemed to die as soon as uttered. Some kites hovered overhead, impartial, over the kites passed the mass of a vulture, and, with an impartiality exceeding all, the sky. . . . Beyond the sky must not there be something that overarches all the skies, more impartial even than they? Beyond which again. . . (59–60)

Behind Ronny’s definition of India lies the reality of power relations. Ronny characterises Indians in terms of the seditious type, the coward and those who are apolitical. The imperialists preferred the sporting type of native not only because of the

---

<sup>35</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 249-250

public schoolboy ethos but because they were the least politically conscious. The colonialists denial of the educated Indian as being part of real India reflects a fear of a resistance to their rule. This reflected a common attitude towards the educated Indians by the colonialists. For example, “Kipling’s real dislike is for the educated Indian who is described as a despicable, hypocritical creature.”<sup>36</sup> At the same time, the novel also is sceptical of the stereotype of the real India being located in the ‘toiling ryot’ (281). The definition of ‘real India’ was manipulated by the colonialists to suit their aim of maintaining power in India and Anglo-Indian novelists reinforced this colonial narrative:

The fond colonial belief that the ‘real’ India, which naturally consisted of the peasants, the soldiers and the Princes alone, fervently wished to preserve British rule in perpetuity, while the dissenting microscopic minority of the educated middle class, which was the villain of the piece, was totally inconsequential is also reiterated by several novelists.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, Forster exposes Ronny’s insensitivity, his Eurocentricism and blindness at Fielding’s tea party where he had behaved badly to Aziz and Godbole. The novel suggests India’s resistance to his attitudes: “Ronny’s steps had died away, and there was a moment of absolute silence”(96).

After the trial, the narrator makes a comment which significantly displays the novel’s historical sense of the eventual demise of the Empire as it will be superseded by the power of India’s spirit. The novel shows that imperialism will no longer be victorious:

The triumphant machine of civilisation may suddenly hitch and be immobilized into a car of stone, and at such moments the destiny of the English seems to resemble their predecessors’, who also entered the country with intent to refashion it, but were

---

<sup>36</sup> Pradhan, “Kipling’s India,” *Yearly Review* 2 December (1988): 21.

<sup>37</sup> Naik 80.

in the end worked into its pattern and covered with its dust.  
(215)

India triumphs over the imperial machine because her internal strength comes from an inclusiveness.<sup>38</sup> Her postmodern likeness is a resistance to attempted reconstructions by outsiders.

Forster taking his philosophy from the Bible, suggests that unless you build on a rock, that is, good values, it will be like building on sand. As he says in one of his essays: “unless you have a sound attitude of mind, a right psychology, you cannot construct or reconstruct anything that will endure. . . . Surely the only sound foundation for a civilization is a sound state of mind.”<sup>39</sup> Blunt detects that the British civilisation in India did not possess a sound state of mind because it depended on force. He comments: “The twentieth century, which can teach the nineteenth century so much, may smile at the concluding sentence. And it may retort that the British Empire has not yet declined. But it seems improbable that a rule which now rests avowedly upon force can endure for eighty-one years.”<sup>40</sup> It also was an Empire built on the racism, prejudice and ignorance of the Indians. The novel suggests that the demise of the Empire will result from an internal corruption and a resistance to its corruption by Indians.

The hollowness of the Marabar caves is symbolic of the hollowness of the imperial enterprise. Fielding is aware of this, after the Marabar incident he thinks that “everything echoes now”. Perhaps the initial idea of doing good in India had been positive but this ideal is rendered nonsensical in the cave through its echo – ‘ou-boum’ (159). Fielding is not able to develop his thoughts about this echo, it remains at the edge

---

<sup>38</sup> In *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 1973) the narrator, Marlow, suggests that the imperialists could not really control Africa; he says: “We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there – there you could look at a thing monstrous and free” (69). This is a dangerous orientalist description, although we cannot be sure whether it is from Marlow’s perspective or Conrad’s. *A Passage to India* is able to convey the idea of India’s resistance to the invader’s control without making her appear as something dark and monstrous.

<sup>39</sup> “Tolerance” [first published 1941], *Two Cheers For Democracy* 43.

<sup>40</sup> “Wilfrid Blunt” [first published 1919-1920], *Abinger Harvest* 271.



of his mind because his job is too important to him as it is to Ronny; whereas, when Adela acknowledges and speaks the truth, realising her self-deception that made her believe in Aziz's guilt, the echo leaves her and so does her prospective husband and position in Anglo-Indian society. The nineteenth century hero-worshipping of the imperialist ideal changes to the modernistic conception of the colonialists as hollow men. When the character Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness*, says: "The horror! The horror!"<sup>41</sup> this refers to his discovery that his imperialist ideals were not profound but hollow and entailed the suppression of an African alterity. An Indian alterity is symbolised in the Marabar Caves by the reverberating echo. Margaret in *Howards End* discovers a parallel ugly reality of the apparent depth, but, in reality shallowness of the imperialist enterprise:

And even when she penetrated to the inner depths, she found only the ordinary table and Turkey carpet, and though the map over the fireplace did depict a helping of West Africa, it was a very ordinary map. Another map hung opposite, on which the whole continent appeared, looking like a whale marked out for blubber. . . .<sup>42</sup>

This frightening image powerfully suggests the hollowness of the Empire as it is based on the economic exploitation of the colony by capitalism in the mother country. Ironically, the colonialists in the colony itself are being duped by rhetoric such as: "He doesn't want the money, it is work he wants, though it is beastly work – dull country, dishonest natives, an eternal fidget over fresh water and food. A nation who can produce men of that sort may well be proud. No wonder England has become an Empire."<sup>43</sup> The novel mocks the Lieutenant Governor's rhetoric which displays a lack of real concern for the welfare of the Empire's colonialists and subjects of the colonies: "Sir Gilbert, though not an enlightened man, held enlightened opinions. Exempted by a

---

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart Of Darkness* 111.

<sup>42</sup> *Howards End* 183.

<sup>43</sup> *Howards End* 105.

long career in the Secretariat from personal contact with the peoples of India, he was able to speak of them urbanely, and to deplore racial prejudice" (257). The colonialists think they are in India to fulfil the ideal of the White man's Burden but instead they are being used to uphold economic interests. Forster uses this concept in an ironic sense in *Howards End*: "They [the Wilcoxes] had the colonial spirit, and were always making for some spot where the white man might carry his burden unobserved." <sup>44</sup> Unlike the 'heroes' in the colonial countries who make a show of their 'burden', the Wilcoxes are interested in the profits. Furthermore, this suggests a silencing of the imperialist project in the mother-country. People like Margaret are interested in an intellectual, abstract way in the heroicism of the Empire and Mr Wilcox in contrast is interested in the Empire for material reasons. In Mr Wilcox's justification there is an absence of any sense of repression and violence in his referring to the Empire merely in terms of trade: "'Someone's got to go,' he said simply. 'England will never keep her trade overseas unless she is prepared to make sacrifices.'" <sup>45</sup>

Forster is trying to convey the ironic reality that the self-importance which the imperialists in India assume for themselves is illusory for they are really part of a larger scheme of economic exploitation. Furthermore, not only are the colonialists imposing this ideal of the White man's Burden on the Indians but they themselves are subscribing to the authority of this ideal. This is visible in Ronny's mimicking of his superiors. Savage's comment (in the introduction) suggests that Forster is saying that if the colonialists had been more personal and individual in their behaviour, that would solve some of the ugly realities of colonialism. On the contrary, Forster has shown that the colonialists (especially through Ronny) are not able to be personal and individual because they are part of a larger system.

---

<sup>44</sup> *Howards End* 190.

<sup>45</sup> *Howards End* 123-124.

The novel undermines colonialism by suggesting the human cost not only for the colonised but also for the colonialists as a result of power. This is quite different from commending, as Anglo-Indian literature often did, the 'sacrifice' the colonialists made in coming to India. The idea of the coloniser's own colonisation is overtly expressed in *Burmese Days*. The main character Flory says: "Why, of course, the lie that we're here to uplift our poor black brothers instead of to rob them. I suppose it's a natural enough lie. But it corrupts us, it corrupts us in ways you can't imagine."<sup>46</sup> In *A Passage to India*, this corruption of the human being is experienced by Ronny who did not always see life in terms of power. With his official position in India, he had lost his creativity – Ronny had given up the viola. Mrs Moore notices that her son has become less honest. Correspondingly Forster says in one of his essays: "the possession of power lifts them into a region where normal honesty never pays."<sup>47</sup> She sees that he is no longer concerned with justice and ethics apart from justifying the Empire: "How he did rub it in that he was not in India to behave pleasantly, and derived positive satisfaction therefrom! He reminded her of his public-school days. The traces of young-man humanitarianism had sloughed off. . . ." (70). The coloniser ultimately colonises himself/herself, which then suggests that the fixed categories of 'coloniser' and 'colonised' are simplistic.

---

<sup>46</sup> George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (London: Penguin, 1944) 37.

<sup>47</sup> "What I Believe," *Two Cheers* 71.

## Part Two

Underlying *A Passage to India*'s critique of imperialism is visible a sexual politics. Some feminist literary critics have argued that it displays Forster's misogyny because he has represented the Anglo-Indian women as far worse in their attitudes towards the Indians than the men. Hamidullah, an Indian character, holds the view that the Englishwomen are indeed worse: "I give any Englishman two years, be he Turton or Burton. It is only the difference of a letter. And I give any Englishwoman six months" (34). M. K. Naik, although he also admits that there are exceptions, does not believe that to represent the Englishwoman in this sense is a misrepresentation of the colonial experience: "Colonial Englishwoman have often been blamed—not entirely unjustly—for their insular exclusiveness and their part in causing the unfortunate rift between the Englishman and the Indian. But one also meets with English women of an entirely different persuasion in Anglo-Indian fiction."<sup>48</sup> Reinforcing this perspective further, the critic Nirad Chaudhuri comments: "on top of the scale of the former offensiveness of the English in India, the mem-sahib goes first."<sup>49</sup>

Unlike the representation of the men of Empire no glimmer of humanity in the colonial women is conveyed, except for Mrs Moore. While one could attribute their prejudice to a 'muddle-headedness', the women are openly manipulative and violently exclude Indians from the definition of being human to an even greater extent. Their manipulative 'female' natures, which cause the gulf between the Englishman and the Indian, is suggested in: "The Englishmen had intended to play up better, but had been prevented from doing so by their womenfolk, whom they had to attend, provide with tea, advise about dogs, etc" (66). Similarly, the novel says that it was when Fielding married that he became more of an imperialist: "He had thrown in his lot with Anglo-

---

<sup>48</sup> Naik 128.

<sup>49</sup> Nirad C. Chaudhuri, "Passage To and From India," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of A Passage To India*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970) 103.

India by marrying a countrywoman, and he was acquiring some of its limitations, and already felt surprise at his own past heroism” (313). Mrs Callendar and Mrs Lesley imagine that they are too civilized to acknowledge the existence of an ordinary Indian, yet their snubbing of Aziz and appropriation of his tonga are offered clearly as examples of uncivilized imperialistic behaviour. During the period of the trial the Anglo-Indian women invent cruel ways in which to treat Indians.<sup>50</sup> The colonial men patronised the Indians but their attitude towards them was not quite as brutal as: “Her friends[who] kept up their spirits by demanding holocausts of natives. . .” (200). Forster ironically portrays how acceptable and normative it was to speak about the Indians in this callous manner. The novel shows how in their ‘civilised’ hearts lurks this uncivilised sense of morality and justice.

However, while the colonial women perpetuate the colonial discourse in a cruder fashion, the novel suggests that they are under a higher authority. Even though they make things more difficult for the men, they are also empowered by them in the first place. *A Passage to India* is not particularly interested in conveying the colonial women as victims, but it does go so far as suggesting that they are being used to reinforce colonialism. They dehumanise Indians but there is something dehumanising about the way they are treated by their husbands who in fact encourage them to treat the Indians in this manner. For example, this is visible, although covertly, in: “‘To work, Mary, to work,’ cried the Collector, touching his wife on the shoulder with a *switch*.” (61; emphasis added). Furthermore, their bodies are used as a justification (in terms of their bodies being the possessions of the men) for violence and repression of the Indians.<sup>51</sup> The Anglo-Indian community sees Ronny as the real victim of Adela’s assault, not her, let alone Aziz. This shows that the novel is trying to convey that the Empire is not only an imperialist enterprise but it is a patriarchal one as well. The narrator says about the

---

<sup>50</sup> An attack on an Englishwoman was always followed by harsh reprisals, such as in the Sherwood case on 10 April, 1919, when General Dyer issued a crawling order (353n.). This attack was avenged by flogging six Indians who were allegedly implicated (351n.).

<sup>51</sup> Jenny Sharpe 29.

Anglo-Indian men collected in the smoking-room of the Club after the incident in the Marabar: "At the name of Heaslop a fine and beautiful expression was renewed on every face. Miss Quested was only a victim, but young Heaslop was a martyr; he was the recipient of all the evil intended against them by the country they had tried to serve; he was bearing the sahib's cross" (192). Before the trial the colonialists conjure up an image of vulnerable English womanhood which needs to be defended from immoral Indian men. Forster incisively parodies the hypocrisy of the colonial women and men who use the concept of innocent child/mother as moral justification to oppress the Indians by suggesting the potential for even greater brutalities against the Indians to be committed by the colonialists. Forster mocks the suggestion of racial purity as a national battle cry, in the image of Mrs Blaikston, who is Anglo-Saxon: "with her abundant figure and masses of corngold hair, she symbolized all that is worth fighting and dying for . . . clasping the infant and rather wishing he would not blow bubbles down his chin at such a moment as this"(188). The women contribute eagerly to this image of powerlessness. The novel undermines the colonial women severely but often in a humorous way, which is finally even more cutting. As Denning claims, "there is a lot of politics in laughter", suggesting that politics can be covert.<sup>52</sup> An example from the novel is: "She [Mrs Turton] paused. Profiting by her wrath, the heat invaded her. She subsided into a lemon squash, and continued between the sips to murmur, 'Weak, weak'" (220).

Even the colonial men are embarrassed by this kind of talk. A further example of the colonial women displaying this kind of talk is the following: "Why, they ought to crawl from here to the caves on their hands and knees, wherever an Englishwoman's in sight, they oughtn't to be spoken to, they ought to be spat at, they ought to be ground into the dust. . ." (220). Power exists more in the hands of the men because they do not take what the women say seriously. This is perhaps a point when Forster's bias is revealed;

---

<sup>52</sup> Denning, "Diembodied Artifacts: Edward Said's *Culture And Imperialism*" 82.

he identifies more with the men here. The novel suggests that the lack of respect the men have for the women puts them in a position of inferiority similar to the Indians.

Adela Quested is an English visitor to India rather than one of the resident Anglo-Indian woman and this difference renders her a degree of individuality. She is a more complex portrayal of the colonial woman and her attitudes. Firstly, her attitude is reflected by her resistance to subscribing to the colonialist discourse which the Anglo-Indian women perpetuate. Even they notice that she is not a 'pukka' colonial woman. In a sense she acts as a counter discourse to colonial authority. However, she mainly reinforces the colonial discourse and feminist commentators are critical of the extent to which Forster unfairly portrays her as a representative of the colonial woman.

Some feminist readings suggest that Adela has been unfairly treated by the narrative, particularly as her experience is kept a mystery, although at the same time it is suggested that her experience is a result of her delusions. Feminist critiques suggest that it is a typical patriarchal move to leave Adela's attacker a mystery rather than punish him; after all Forster did not rule out the possibility that it was a man ("In the cave it is *either* a man, *or* the supernatural, *or* an illusion.")<sup>53</sup> This is an instance where both the feminist and postcolonial perspectives coincide in their criticism of Forster. To keep the incident mysterious is to suggest two similar kinds of colonisation by implying the stereotype of woman as mysterious or very repressed and India as a mysterious place in which destructive things like that can happen. The critic Frances Restuccia is sceptical of Forster's rendering of India as mysteriousness, she refers to this as: "Forster's indulgence in Oriental indeterminacy," which according to her is a way to escape his responsibility towards the well-being of the women in the novel. She furthermore argues on this point: "On the one hand, such indeterminacy holds open the shadow possibility (impossible to realize) that Aziz is guilty of attempting to rape

---

<sup>53</sup> Stallybrass 26.

Adela—no virtue there for anti-imperialists. But it also prevents us from finding him, or anyone else guilty of the book's offenses against women in general.”<sup>54</sup>

At the same time, Forster uses the mystery that shrouds her experience in the caves to interrogate the discourses of imperialism and patriarchy. For example, Fielding's insistence on knowing what happened in a conversation with Adela in the cave is his male colonisation of her. The novel is sceptical about the imperialistic norm of rationality and empirical evidence when there are other ways through which to perceive Adela's experience. Some of these feminist readings desire a determinate explanation and thus are unable to acknowledge that element of mystery in India and life which the novel is trying to convey. Similarly, postcolonialists' preoccupation with imperial exploitation makes them unable to accept this either.

The critic Laura Kipnis, referring to the movie version, believes that “hysteria in *A Passage to India* [has been made] to stand in for and bear the historical brunt of a renounced colonial past.”<sup>55</sup> This suggests that Forster is part of a patriarchal discourse when he uses the female character, Adela, as a scapegoat for a colonial past that the men want to avoid taking responsibility for. Adela is seen as causing the trouble between the English and Indians (which was always there but which the Collector thinks can be submerged as long as the two races do not try to become intimate with each other) by socialising with Indians because of her desire to see the ‘real India’. She renders Aziz homeless by taking his invitation to see the Marabar caves seriously (as a result of cultural ignorance). She has a delusory experience in the caves and accuses Aziz of rape. Forster suggests that the men are resentful towards Adela for causing this trouble in the first place: “‘After all, it's our women who make everything more difficult out here’ . . . and beneath his [McBryde's] chivalry to Miss Quested resentment lurked, waiting its day – perhaps there is a grain of resentment in all chivalry” (217).

---

<sup>54</sup> Frances L Restuccia. “‘A Cave of My Own’: E.M. Forster and Sexual Politics,” *Raritan* 9 (1989): 112.

<sup>55</sup> Laura Kipnis, “The Phantom Twitchings of an Amputated Limb: Sexual Spectacle in the Post-colonial Epic,” *Wide Angle* 11.4 (1988): 44.



Forster criticises a concealed patriarchal agenda in the notion of 'chivalry' when he enlarges the initial statement of resentment against Adela into men resenting women in general.

When Adela Quested asks about the English social contact with Indians, Mrs Callendar says: "Why, the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die" (48). The 'ugly reality' of colonialism exists in this desire to obliterate the existence of Indians from sight in their own country. Fielding recognises the socio-political significance of his statement when he says that the way to see the 'real India' is to start by "seeing Indians". Adela perpetuates a racist/colonialist discourse, when she inhumanely sees Aziz as an evil man: "There he sat – strong, neat little Indian with very black hair, and pliant hands. She viewed him without special emotion. Since they last met, she had elevated him into a principle of evil, but now he seemed to be what he had always been – a slight acquaintance" (223). 'Elevated' signifies a fetishizing of the other which displays racism and dehumanisation. Adela's dehumanizing of the other reflects a failure of the social imagination and her solipsism. This is what results in the disaster in the first place which is parallel to and leads to the tragedy of colonialism. The kind of impersonality she feels when she distances herself from the humanity of Indians, enables her to accuse Aziz of rape: "What a handsome little Oriental he was. . . . She did not admire him with any personal warmth, for there was nothing of the vagrant in her blood. . ." (163). If these are Forster's thoughts, then to see Adela liking an Indian as 'vagrant' is an exposure of his colonialism and racism. But this interpretation does not seem consistent with the novel and what we know of Forster himself as regards his willingness to have relationships with Indians. It is however conceivable that Forster is displaying a misogyny here in his reluctance to imagine a heterosexual relationship between Adela and Aziz. The critic Ralph Crane seems to agree with this argument:

This bridge [between Mrs Moore and Adela], however, begins to crumble when another bridge, that between male and female, between Adela and Ronny Heaslop, is established. Adela's

decision to marry Ronny severs her relationship with the 'real India', it also damages her relationship with Mrs Moore. The fact that this unsuccessful heterosexual relationship erodes two other relationships (the relationship between Adela and Mrs Moore, and the relationship between Adela and Aziz) may be due, at least in part, to Forster's own homosexuality.<sup>56</sup>

Trivedi, displaying both a feminist and a postcolonialist perspective, suggests that Adela is being used by the novel to reinforce an orientalist stereotype about India:

For her [the character – Hilda in Edward Thompson's *An Indian Day* (1927)], then, India is as a release and an opportunity for independence, vocation, and feminist self-fulfilment, unlike for Adela, to whom it turns out—in a hoary cliché of the Raj, which the novel finally reinforces rather than interrogates—to be an assault, a nightmare, a delusion.<sup>57</sup>

Trivedi replaces a negative stereotype of India with a positive one, but still Hilda's feelings are subjective so they do not necessarily capture the spirit of India. *A Passage to India* goes further than Trivedi realises and emphasises Adela's self-projection. It subtly interrogates how clichés such as India's destructiveness are a result of dishonesty, a lack of self-knowledge and furthermore, a lack of connection with Indians. It shows how the image of India is a projection of the westerner's psyche in the first place and thus how hypocritical colonial stereotypes are. When Adela realised that she was wrong to think of marrying Ronny when she did not love him, she displaces this 'wrong' onto another male figure – Aziz – because this is acceptable. The shock of this unconscious realisation makes her imagine that Aziz has raped her: "The discovery had come so suddenly that she felt like a mountaineer whose rope has broken. Not to love the man one's going to marry! Not to find out till this moment!"(163). She attempts to justify her marriage by keeping her emotions under control rather than

---

<sup>56</sup> Ralph Crane, *Inventing India: A History of India in English-Language Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1992) 84.

<sup>57</sup> Trivedi 172.

understanding them. The novel suggests this is a characteristically British way. It states that “her emotions [were] well under control. . .” (163). The personal and political are connected because Adela deceives herself into thinking that she loves Ronny and it is that self-deception that allows her to delude herself into thinking that there had been an offer of marriage in the caves and accusing Aziz of rape: “Adela had always meant to tell the truth . . . and she had rehearsed this as a difficult task – difficult, because her disaster in the cave was connected, though by a thread, with another part of her life, her engagement to Ronny” (229).

All the English characters suffer from ‘unconscious deceit’, Adela is no exception in this sense, and Forster is more sceptical about ‘muddle’ and ‘mystery’ than is normally recognised. There is an Indian muddle (outside) and an English muddle (inside): “She had thought of love just before she went in, and had innocently asked Aziz what marriage was like, and she supposed that her question had roused evil in him . . . it was the one point she wanted to keep *obscure*. . .” (229; emphasis added). The novel sometimes suggests that chaos as a result of self-awareness would be more truthful than maintaining an artificial order. Adela sustains her lie by maintaining that Aziz is guilty, trying to put the blame on an external source; whereas Mrs Moore resists Adela’s colonising because she realises the innocence of the villagers: “As each person emerged she looked for a villain, but none was there, and she realized that she had been among the mildest individuals, whose only desire was to honour her. . .” (159); as it was also the intention of Aziz to honour Adela. Mrs Moore intuitively realises that Adela has placed herself in the position of reinforcing the rhetoric and ideology of the Empire. She says of her: “She has started the machinery; it will work to its end” (211).

For Forster, Adela fails as a participant in the colonial encounter because there never was any affection or connection between her and Indians. The novel’s partial rejection of fact and logic (when used for the purposes of a colonial discourse) in preference for feeling and sympathy is an indication of seeing things from the colonised’s perspective. Her protests against the way the colonialists treat the Indians

are mainly a result of her sense of fairness. Similarly, the sense of justice she displays in the courtroom when she admits Aziz's innocence is rational and not emotive: "'No,' she said in a flat, unattractive voice" (231). That is why Hamidullah finds it hard to forgive her and Aziz comes to the conclusion that Adela's desire to see the 'real India': "was only a form of ruling India; no sympathy lay behind it . . ." (301). For Forster it represents colonial behaviour not to be close to Indians in this context. Fielding believes that this is an indication of her undeveloped heart. He concludes:

'you have no real affection for Aziz, or Indians generally.' She assented. 'The first time I saw you, you were wanting to see India, not Indians, and it occurred to me: Ah, that won't take us far. Indians know whether they are liked or not – they cannot be fooled here. Justice never satisfies them, and that is why the British Empire rests on sand' (258).

India seems to detect her lack of sympathy and thus in return it ends up giving her only a few garlands (245). It was rumoured that she had been struck down by the deity in the middle of her lies but this the novel suggests is a subjective reality. While Adela is easily forgotten, Mrs Moore survives, in a positive sense, imaginatively in the minds of Aziz and the legend makers (255). Aziz and Mrs Moore's relationship is poetically conceived in terms of the 'secret understanding of the heart'. The novel seems to admire Mrs Moore for her ability to 'transcend' the injustice, cruelty and indifference of the colonial attitude. Neither does Mrs Moore leave India exactly – her body was lowered into yet another India – the Indian Ocean. This is symbolic of her having connected with Indian people and India whereas Adela was not able to and therefore left no trace of herself in India in the imagination or otherwise. How the Indians see Mrs Moore (in the court – she would have saved a poor Indian) as a counter-discourse is subject to the narrator's ever present scepticism. It is more a question of how people perceive each other. Said suggests a self-projection on the part of the Indians: "To the Indians roused momentarily to a sort of nationalist coherence during the court scene, Mrs Moore is less a person than a mobilizing phrase, a funny Indianized principle of protest and

community: 'Esmis Esmoor'".<sup>58</sup> The Indians project their desire for freedom on to Mrs Moore's sympathy for them.

However, Adela is also seen as a victim to some extent in the colonial situation because her body is used as a battlefield for the colonial battle to wage its war. In this sense the novel acknowledges that she is being used by the colonialists as a scapegoat. Women in the novel are furthermore used to reinforce male bonding, such as when Ronny is made a hero by the colonialists because of what he has gone through as a result of Adela's alleged rape. Another example is when Aziz shows Fielding a photograph of his dead wife which strengthens their relationship. By doing this Aziz is allowing Fielding to enter the Moslem brotherhood, from which the women are excluded. At the same time, the colonial experience is not merely a battle between the sexes, for the colonial women are part of the colonial discourse against Adela's individuality. Furthermore, there is a tension between the colonised and the feminised objects where sometimes the former resists its subjugation at the expense of the latter. For example, Forster allows the Indians to counteract a colonialist stereotype which McBryde puts forward in the trial, but at the price of insulting Adela's body:

Taking of his spectacles, as was his habit before enunciating a general truth, he looked into them sadly, and remarked that the darker races are attracted by the fairer, but not vice versa. . . .

'Even when the lady is so uglier than the gentleman?' The comment fell from nowhere, from the ceiling perhaps.

But the comment had upset Miss Quested. Her body resented being called ugly, and trembled. (222)

Furthermore, after the trial, the Indians "shook hands over her shoulder, shouted through her body . . ." (233). This form of resistance violates Adela in its dismissal of her person completely. Adela's colonisation as a result of this destructive colonial situation is conveyed in the following deliberate pun by the novel: "Hour after hour

---

<sup>58</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 245.

Miss Derek and Mrs McBryde examined her through magnifying glasses, always coming on fresh colonies. . . .”(199).

The novel hints at the colonisation of the white women themselves but surely even more significant, there is an absence of recognition of the ‘real’ victims – the Indian women. For example, Salman Rushdie has said that a more appropriate metaphor of the colonial experience would have been the rape of an Indian woman but not even Forster dared to write about such a crime.<sup>59</sup> Naik adds to this argument: “Anglo-Indian fiction can hardly be said to be fair to Indian women in general. It is extremely significant that no Indian women characters figure prominently in *A Passage to India*, Mrs. Bhattacharya and Mrs Das, who appear briefly in the Bridge Party in Chapter V being little more than names.”<sup>60</sup> If the novel contains a feminist perspective it hardly includes the viewpoint of any Indian woman but it does open up possibilities for deconstruction and an inter-textuality in which it is conscious that other writers will respond. The silence and absence of the Indian women is something the novel points out. For example, the dominant image of Indian women in the novel – the purdah – which reflects a mute, mysterious and unchanging mask, is not colonising itself but about colonisation.

The novel’s female characters cannot be seen in terms of a binary opposition to the men, that is, the rational-intuitive distinction, for Mrs Moore is largely intuitive, whereas Adela is mostly rational. However, the novel constructs a feminine way of being which destabilises truths of the colonialist discourse, which after all, is a patriarchal enterprise. As Adela is a disruptive influence to the colonised subject, she is equally a disruptive influence to the colonial authority. This happens when she diverges from the rational and has a spiritual experience (229–230) and then is able to see the simple, clear truth. Her spiritual experience subverts colonial authority by being

---

<sup>59</sup> Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 89.

<sup>60</sup> Naik 166.

contrary to rationalism. The novel is not trying to suggest simply the clichéd opposition between spirituality and rationalism but that colonial facts are debatable. For example, the rationale that the darker races are attracted to the fairer but not vice versa is sceptically treated by the novel. Adela acts as a force subversive of British colonialism in bringing the imperial machine to a temporary halt. Forster sees British civilisation as an imperial force in terms of the 'machine', which suggests that Britain is technologically superior but undeveloped in other ways. Therefore, when "The Superintendent gazed at his witness as if she was a broken machine, and said, 'Are you mad?'" (232), it symbolises how the machine can stop working if one of the cogs 'rebels'. The larger significance of this suggests the demise of the Empire. She is left husbandless, positionless, even Fielding perceives her courage: "When she saw she was wrong, she pulled herself up with a jerk and said so. I want you to realize what that means. All her friends around her, the entire British Raj pushing her forward. She stops, sends the whole thing to smithereens" (251). Adela displays a great deal of courage when she tells the plain truth but the novel does not glorify her by making Adela a heroine. She is not radical but rather ordinary. For example, she is still disappointed when Ronny breaks off the engagement. The novel thus is ironic when it describes how some of the Indian students garlanded Adela and even "some addressed her as Mrs Moore!" (235). The novel portrays a muddled and a comic reality of India in which the Indians garland their enemy and they transform an old helpless woman into a deity. Forster's ironic portrayal might be seen as indicating the novel's orientalism. Rather, this is valuable because it conveys beautifully the subjectivity and muddle of India and life.

### **Conclusion**

The colonial experience in the canonical text is generally perceived from a western, middle class and male point of view. This chapter has shown the ways in which Forster has succeeded in deconstructing this dominant perspective. The main way Forster has done this is to show that there is no ideal or concept like the

Whiteman's Burden at the heart of the imperial enterprise. What exists at the centre or 'heart of darkness' is the undeveloped heart of the colonial man. Furthermore, the novel interrogates the imperial ideas that Britain is the centre of culture and civilisation, that Britain is in India for India's own good, and that Britain is able to give impartial justice to the Indians. It questions the imperial definitions of India and Indians. In addition, it asks what kind of conquest it was really and who was colonised. Still, Forster participates to some extent in this dominant perspective. Although the novel's anti-colonialism is displayed in its deconstruction of the colonialist discourse by parodying the idiom of Anglo-India, this is still part of a political stance, namely, the liberal humanist one and therefore may not represent the Indian point of view. The novel takes into account Indian aspirations and values but then it also faces the problem of orientalism.



## *Chapter Two*

### **Liberal Humanism**

#### **Introduction**

Edward Said contends that orientalism justifies imperialism by portraying the 'other' in an inhuman way.<sup>1</sup> He concludes the following:

I consider Orientalism's failure to have been a human as much as an intellectual one; for in having to take up a position of irreducible opposition to a region of the world it considered alien to its own, Orientalism failed to identify with human experience, failed also to see it as human experience.<sup>2</sup>

He believes that Forster's work should be seen as part of the "intellectual genealogy of Orientalism".<sup>3</sup> But *A Passage to India* has not necessarily altogether failed to imagine the 'other' as human, in Said's sense. This chapter explores Forster's 'alternative' discourse to colonialism – liberal humanism – largely through two characters, Mrs Moore and Fielding, who are representatives of this discourse. It will suggest to what extent liberal humanism is an 'alternative' discourse through an analysis of their developed hearts in the colonial situation in India. This is contrary to the undeveloped hearts of the colonialists which sustain the colonial discourse. Their developed hearts are displayed in their ability to see Indians as human by interacting with them on an individual and personal basis. The novel is to an extent, however, aware of the limitations as well as the strengths of their perceptions and interaction. They are not ill-bred or domineering but their liberal humanist way of communicating does not

---

<sup>1</sup> Although according to Ernest Gellner, Said is in the first place guilty of inventing a false viewpoint from which to judge imperialism. He claims in, "The Mightier Pen? Edward Said and the Double Standards of Inside-Out Colonialism," *Times Literary Supplement* 19 February (1993): 3, that Said has created "a bogey called Orientalism".

<sup>2</sup> *Orientalism* 328.

<sup>3</sup> *Orientalism* 99.

acknowledge the colonisation of the Indian or their own political positions to a great enough extent.

*A Passage to India* contains such ambiguities and equivocations. There has to be an enquiry into the characters and the novel's perception of what it means to be 'human'. On the one hand, Mrs Moore and Fielding acknowledge a common humanity between themselves and individual Indian characters, and a gulf divides this attitude from an explicitly colonialist one. But how does this concept of 'common humanity' translate? The novel does not only see the British-Indian encounter in terms of the labels of coloniser and colonised and the binary opposites of Orient-Occident. It is easier for Mrs Moore and Fielding to acknowledge the Indians as human than for the colonialists because they share liberal humanist values in common with some Indians. In fact, 'Eastern values', as represented in the novel, such as friendship and spirituality of the heart, are privileged because they reinforce liberal humanist values. Therefore, is liberal humanism really an alternative discourse which renders an Indian perspective or is it an orientalist discourse in which the dominant perspective is an English colonial one? To be able to see what is common between the two races despite their differences displays a positive attitude but has difference been transformed to fit in? Is difference made acceptable through self-projection? Ironically, although it is the imagination that is able to make leaps across boundaries, it can nevertheless end up colonising alterity. On the other hand, while Said believes that binaries such as the coloniser-colonised are not edifying, neither would it do to completely dissolve these differences. The novel is able to suggest that Mrs Moore's and Fielding's definitions of being human are sometimes exclusive of the colonised's reality. In other words, they fail to see their Indian friends as human when they do not acknowledge their colonisation. Thus, there needs to be both a sense of identity and an acknowledgement of cultural and political difference in order to see the 'other' as part of the human experience. But when does one's identity end and an alterity begin?

Said is sceptical of the novel's ability to represent the other as human in terms of 'real' cultural difference and alterity. He is suggesting that Forster's 'self-deconstruction' (Said does not use this term in his reference to Forster) is helpless because he still ends up not representing the other. He perceives Forster's anti-imperialist narrative only in terms of failure, as he does the alleged alternative discourses of similar writers: "Conrad, Forster, Malraux, T. E. Lawrence take narrative from the triumphalist experience of imperialism into the extremes of self-consciousness, discontinuity, self-referentiality, and corrosive irony . . . ." <sup>4</sup> To an extent Said is right, India is sometimes as inaccessible to Forster as it is to his most sensitive characters. At the same time, Paul Armstrong seems to think that the novel is capable of being more than merely self-referential. He says it gives a voice to other plausible ways of being and behaviour. Armstrong's argument implies that Forster shows signs of being a cultural relativist in his ability to represent different cultural perspectives. Furthermore, representing the point of view of the colonised who are of a different culture is questionable generally. Said himself reflects on this difficulty. He says: "Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly." <sup>5</sup> This suggests his awareness of the problem of self-projection. In fact Ernest Gellner does not think Said has been successful in avoiding this problem and instead believes that self-projection is visible in Said's writing on the behalf of the colonised. He has accused Said of an 'inverse colonialism'. <sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the novel has in some ways succeeded in deconstructing its own political and cultural identity. This is suggested in Forster's awareness of the limitations of liberal humanism and displayed in his scepticism of both characters. In addition, he engages in a self-deconstruction by acknowledging worlds beyond the visions of even

---

<sup>4</sup> *Culture And Imperialism* 227.

<sup>5</sup> *Orientalism* 45.

<sup>6</sup> Gellner, "The Mightier Pen?" 3.

his most sensitive characters (who often seem to represent his own thoughts), peripheral lives, and an incomprehensible India. The novel's awareness of their solipsism and in some ways its own suggests an anti-colonial discourse. Furthermore, the novel expresses the author's scepticism through the invention of India as a metaphysical trope which undermines liberal humanism and other political discourses. The novel does not suggest the stereotype that India is simply hostile to western humanism but it embodies a political stance which suggests that western humanism can be a monolithic discourse which sometimes excludes a great deal of life whereas India is more inclusive itself and symbolic of the inclusiveness of life. Thus, in some ways, Forster is able to deconstruct western humanism but then he is also involved in self-projection. For example, the construction of India as a metaphysical trope is reflective of Forster's own concerns in the mid-1920s, such as his disillusionment with the war.

Unfairly, Said limits Forster's self-deconstruction of liberal humanism to 'novelistic irony'. Forster's criticism of Mrs Moore's and Fielding's complacency about their complicity in the economic exploitation and oppression of the Indians suggests the novel's awareness of their inability to see the other as human in all ways. Forster's depiction of liberal humanist hypocrisy is an indication of the extent to which his anti-imperialist critique goes. It goes beyond a critique of colonial hypocrisy (Chapter One) by including a critique of liberal humanist hypocrisy. This awareness is also a reflection of a reality that goes beyond the bounds of this novel. Said strongly criticises orientalism's critique for being limited to the text.<sup>7</sup> However, Forster's sense of the contestability of his liberal humanist values as concerns colonialism in his novel is part of his general political consciousness. This is reflected in his essay, 'What I Believe', which contains one of the main statements of his ideology. Forster opts for liberal humanism above all other discourse but he is critical of this philosophy as well:

I belong to the fag-end of Victorian liberalism. . . . In many ways it was an admirable age. It practised benevolence and

---

<sup>7</sup> Ahmed, *In Theory* 181.

philanthropy, was humane and intellectually curious, upheld free speech, had little colour-prejudice, believed that individuals are and should be different, entertained a sincere faith in the progress of society. . . . But though the education was humane it was imperfect, inasmuch as we none of us realized our economic position. In came the nice fat dividends, up rose the lofty thoughts, and we did not realize that all the time we were exploiting the poor of our own country and the backward races abroad. . . . Which means that life has become less comfortable for the Victorian liberal, and that our outlook. . . . now hangs over the abyss.<sup>8</sup>

Forster believes that the liberal humanist ideology hangs over the abyss because it is an exclusive discourse. The ethical dilemma is located in its evasion of the 'colonised' reality of the poor and backward races. Forster acknowledges this reality by admitting that the economic comfort for the middle class is dependent upon the exploitation of the colonised. He reflected this irony in *Howards End*. Furthermore, he states that often these English values have been upheld without considering the plight of the colonised peoples in his essay "Liberty In England": "I know very well how limited, and how open to criticism, English freedom is. It is race-bound and it's class-bound. It means freedom for the Englishman, but not for the subject-races of his Empire."<sup>9</sup> Forster is able to deconstruct 'English freedom' unlike some of the great philosophers of the nineteenth century period, like John Stuart Mill, for whom the ugly hypocrisy of such underlying realities seemed to have escaped.

---

<sup>8</sup> "The Challenge of our Time" [first published 1946], *Two Cheers* 54–55.

<sup>9</sup> "Liberty in England" [An address delivered at the Congrès International des Ecrivains at Paris on June 21st, 1935], *Abinger Harvest* 62.

## Part One

While the average colonial woman possesses no desire whatsoever to understand Indians and India, and although Adela tries, she is too rational and logical in her approach; Mrs Moore, on the other hand, is intuitive and illogical and seems to be emotionally closer to the Indians and to the 'unseen' in India. What is traditionally labelled as a 'feminine' way of being is also an 'Indian' approach to reality. If Forster seems to privilege this 'alternative' passage to India to the dominant colonial one, it is also subjected to the author's sceptical gaze.

Mrs Moore's behaviour towards Aziz displays the 'counter-discourse' in action and the novel questions what kind of alternative it really is. Her humane behaviour towards Aziz is admirable. She transcends Anglo-Indian prejudice towards Indians easily, partly because she is a visitor to the country and she has no ties in it. Her reason for coming to India is to introduce Adela to her son, although the experience of India makes her feel that marriage is not of great importance. However, her sense of humanity needs to be deconstructed and perhaps her experience in the Marabar Caves reveals the other side of Mrs Moore more honestly. After all, what does she think about the colonial situation? About how the Anglo-Indians treat the Indians?

Her sympathy and kindness are appreciated by Aziz and this shows Forster's creation of an Indian alterity. Forster believes that the oriental values these emotions greatly and that personal relations are the most important thing to him. Her attitude which is like an Indian one has the ability to transcend the political relationship of coloniser-colonised, at least momentarily. It seems that Mrs Moore's seductive appeal for friendship makes Aziz forget their political positions and makes him less resistant to colonialism because there are people like Mrs Moore. In much the same way, Hamidullah keeps dreaming of his old friends the Bannisters and their kindness to him which makes him politically impotent (35).

When the novel was published in 1924, an anonymous Indian said:

When I read *A Passage to India*, I was filled with a sense of great relief and of an almost personal gratitude to Forster. . . . It was because for the first time I saw myself reflected in the mind of an English author, without losing all semblance of a human face. . . . Mr Forster in *A Passage to India* has created the Easterner in English literature, for he is the first to raise grotesque legendary creatures and terracotta figures to the dignity of human beings.<sup>10</sup>

Although there is a contemporary scepticism towards 'human dignity', which questions whether Aziz is dignified at all in his frequent lack of response to his colonisation, it is significant that some Indians themselves are appreciating Forster's choice of the liberal humanist perspective which attempts to see beyond the coloniser-colonised relationship. Forster does justice to Indian people not to see them only in a political context. But as Said suggests, it is not edifying either to not see their political context at all. For Forster occasionally creates an opposition between being human and being political and in this sense 'being human' is an essentialism for it does not include the need of the political subject for freedom.

Mrs Moore's evaluation of Aziz is unclouded by the racism and sense of superiority of her son. She is able to see that although Aziz appeared "unreliable, inquisitive, vain", this assessment was "false as the summary of the man; the essential life of him had been slain"(55). She does not essentialise Aziz as Ronny does in his references to him as a 'Mohammedan' and 'native' (52). He cannot see Aziz beyond these labels. Forster says outside the text: "we who seek the truth are only concerned with politics when they deflect us from it."<sup>11</sup> In other words, Aziz behaves badly because he has not previously been treated with human dignity by the colonials.

---

<sup>10</sup> "An Indian" ("A.S.B."), "Hommage à M. Forster," August 1928. Ed. Philip Gardner, *The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973): 290.

<sup>11</sup> "Salute To The Orient!" *Abinger Harvest* 258.

The relationship between Mrs Moore and Aziz begins in the holy place of a mosque which is symbolic of Forster's philosophy as concerns the theme of personal relations: "their temple . . . is the holiness of the Heart's affections. . . ." <sup>12</sup> In a sense, liberal humanist values of personal relations and individuals do act as a sanctuary amidst political upheaval. The association of liberal humanist values with a religious sanctuary suggests the contrast between these values and the profane surroundings of colonialism. Is it really such an antithesis after all? Does not the mosque also express cultural and religious rivalry with the Hindus? The mosque is a sanctuary for Aziz not only from English colonisation but from Hindu domination as well. At this point it is visible that India's problems go beyond British colonialism. Mrs Moore's 'political innocence', ironically results in having cultural/political impact. Mrs Moore shows a respectful attitude to a Moslem Indian by taking her shoes off before entering the mosque. The exceptional nature of this simple gesture is highlighted by Aziz's surprise that she performed it. It is her universal sense of God that made her do it. To see that God exists in other people's religions suggests that you do not think that your own religion is superior and is, therefore, a positive political message. Said sees the significance of Mrs Moore's gesture: "'Intimacy – never, never.' No wonder that Dr Aziz is so surprised when Mrs Moore takes off her shoes to enter a mosque, a gesture that suggests a deference and establishes friendship in a manner forbidden by the code." <sup>13</sup> We know that colonialism was based on the assumption of the inferiority of the 'other' in all spheres – cultural, religious, among others. The Indian postcolonial interpretation of Trivedi's is perhaps too cynical: "Nor is Hilda's regard for India noticeably pietistic or sentimental, as it is in the case of Adela's chaperone Mrs Moore, whose very first act in the novel is to remove her shoes before entering a deserted

---

<sup>12</sup> "What I Believe," *Two Cheers* 70-71.

<sup>13</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 243.



mosque, because 'God is here'." <sup>14</sup> Trivedi's view opposes what he would interpret as Said's and Forster's tendency to depict the East in an overly religious way.

Mrs Moore is a figure for common humanity in the novel. But the text also questions this idea that she represents. However, Nirad Chaudhuri not perceiving this irony in the novel itself comments about Forster:

For his is an appeal in a political case to the court of humane feelings to what he himself calls 'common humanity' in a later essay. Now, the relationship between common humanity and politics is even more complex than that which exists between morality and politics. I firmly believe that ultimately, politics and morals are inseparable; even so, the most obvious moral judgement on a political situation is not necessarily a right judgement, and for humane feelings to go for a straight tilt at politics is even more quixotic than tilting at windmills. <sup>15</sup>

Forster believes in this idea of 'common humanity' <sup>16</sup> because it transcends a discourse of power, yet it also muffles the reality of political difference. Mrs Moore's attitude of common humanity towards Aziz is politically significant, in that she treats an ordinary Indian as a human being, not as someone inferior, and this is contrary to the colonial discourse. At the same time, it also evades the reality of Aziz's oppression.

Mrs Moore's 'spiritual' experiences give her a humility unrecognisable in the colonialists. Their elusiveness is a counter-discourse to the arrogant claim by the colonialists that they know and understand India. Ronny thinks India can be subdued. He naively reassures Adela after her alleged rape that from now on they would have control over the Marabar caves by numbering them with white paint. Fielding also misses out on the oblique meaning of the caves: "Fielding ran up to see one cave. He wasn't impressed" (168). He arrogantly believes that India is merely a 'muddle' and not

---

<sup>14</sup> Trivedi 172.

<sup>15</sup> Chaudhuri, "Passage to and From India" 70.

<sup>16</sup> "India Again" [first published 1946], *Two Cheers* 323.

a 'mystery' that he need not explore or respect. Whenever the Marabar Hills containing the caves come into Fielding's view he feels, momentarily, unconsciously that he has missed out on something. His failure to see the mystery reflects his lack of knowledge about India and his narrow Eurocentric world-view. On the other hand, Mrs Moore is deeply affected by the Marabar Caves because of her developed spiritual consciousness. Mrs Moore is able to have that 'mental overturn' that Ronny and Fielding cannot. Her mental overturn is 'productive' in the sense that it causes an instability of knowledge about Empire, India and life. Ironically, it does not result in a greater knowledge of India. The novel acknowledges that its anti-colonial discourse is incomplete. The limitations of Forster's characters in reading India and the colonial situation are sometimes his own too. While the imperialists try to dominate what is different, Forster and his liberal humanist characters try to appreciate difference. Furthermore, the English characters occasionally realise their inability to read India adequately. Mrs Moore's sense of the "feeble invasion" of "the queer valley" (160) is self-deconstructing. Although it does not make the queer valley any less queer, it suggests a self-awareness of her limitations.

Mrs Moore's sense of herself, others and life is deconstructed by the Marabar Caves. As a result of her experiences in the caves she questions her role in society as a mother and an old person, a Christian and a friend to an Indian. Her vision in the caves or her metaphysical experience destabilises these identities. She comes out feeling cynical, fed up of her duties and wanting a cave of her own to escape to. She realises Christianity cannot explain the spirituality of a continent like India. Furthermore, she realises that colonialism makes it impossible to retain a friendship with an Indian. Mrs Moore's values which have been undermined by the cave are not hers alone. As a representative of the liberal humanist discourse, the vision in the cave symbolises Forster's awareness of the contingency of his political/ethical values. This represents his questioning of his ideology of liberal humanism and its equivocal success and failure as a counter-discourse to colonialism.

Ebbatson first quotes Wilfred Stone who, in the course of his Jungian interpretation, comments: "one of the of the aims of the book is to make people and their politics look small".<sup>17</sup> Ebbatson then suggests in his response that Stone's claim shows that he does not perceive the novel's greater subtlety: "This strategy is one which defuses the political ambiguity of the text."<sup>18</sup> Forster's invention of a metaphysics is partly an ideological construct by which he attempts to show liberal humanism's weakness against whatever he saw the abyss to be – modernist forces of war and colonialism. But as Stone points out, India and life in all their complexity suggest a postmodern reality where no discourse is privileged over the other, not even the discourse of human beings over the natural world.

What the novel portrays as being the difficulty of man understanding and dealing with man and the universe, can be attributed to what we now think of as the nihilistic side of the politics of postmodernity. The message that Mrs Moore receives from the Marabar cave is that no matter what opinion one has or position one takes, the human condition of man in which he is unable to have control over 'truth' and 'meaning', remains the same – meaningless:

If one had spoken with the tongues of angels and pleaded for all the unhappiness and misunderstanding in the world, past, present, and to come, for all the misery men must undergo whatever their opinion and position . . . it would amount to the same, the serpent would descend and return to the ceiling. (160–161)

The serpent is symbolic in the Indian culture of 'maya' or illusion and in Christianity of the forces that caused man's original sin and his separation thereafter from God and absolute truth. Not only in the caves, but elsewhere in the novel this idea of absolute truth and the Christian idea of God are treated sceptically. Godbole calls God to 'come'

---

<sup>17</sup> Wilfred Stone quoted in Ebbatson and Neale 98.

<sup>18</sup> Ebbatson, and Neale 98.

but he does not and Christianity's simple concept of the authority of God is undermined by his absence in the cave.

The novel suggests that the universe is made up of a great deal of things and resists being labelled by monolithic discourses which are common to the West. This is how Christianity is seen as a failure in terms of being a monolithic discourse. It is not seen as an effective colonising force in the Indian context. Ronny is embarrassed by his mother's religious strain and the two missionaries who have a minimum of converts and who happen to be not very bright. Mr Sorley and Mr Graysford are two Christian missionaries in the city of Chandrapore who try to explain the significance of the universe in a vision which Forster finds limited. The novel mockingly says:

And why should the divine hospitality cease here? Consider, with all reverence, the monkeys. May there not be a mansion for the monkeys also? Old Mr Graysford said No, but young Mr Sorley, who was advanced, said Yes. . . . And the wasps? He became uneasy during the descent to wasps, and was apt to change the conversation. And oranges, cactuses, crystals and mud? And the bacteria inside Mr Sorley? No, no, this is going too far. We must exclude someone from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing. (58)

The experience of India makes Mrs Moore sceptical of Christianity: "He [God] had been constantly in her thoughts since she entered India, though oddly enough He satisfied her less. She must needs pronounce His name frequently, as the greatest she knew, yet she had never found it less efficacious" (71). Furthermore, in the Marabar, her belief is significantly undermined: "poor little talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its divine words from 'Let there be light' to 'It is finished' only amounted to 'boum'" (161). The novel suggests that India is made up of arches beyond arches which the Christian monolithic interpretation of history is not aware. Forster displays his scepticism in totalizing discourses that propose to give all the answers to life's greater complexity. Forster's deconstruction of Christianity as a monolithic discourse is

comparable with his deconstruction of colonialism. He suggests that both discourses fail to include India's people, religion, complexity, and diversity.

At least Mrs Moore displays her awareness by deconstructing the arrogance of the discourses she participates in herself. Before entering the cave she reflects upon how feeble and inconsequential the colonial intrusion is against India's vastness. This signifies India's resistance to colonial invasion in terms of its difference. She "looked at the queer valley and their feeble invasion of it" (160). However, while the novel mocks the exclusionary nature of colonial and Christian discourses, it realises that to be all inclusive is a reality one cannot accept: "'Pathos, piety, courage – they exist, but are identical, and so is filth'" (160). Therefore no discourse is meaningful at this point, even liberal humanism. The novel has tried to suggest generally that such extremes of what we now call postmodernity are not easily adaptable to the human mind.

Mrs Moore's disillusionment to a degree reflects Forster's own. He did not believe that there was going to be a change of heart or a new form of Christianity that would change the world's problems.<sup>19</sup> He had displayed his scepticism through his liberal humanist characters in *Howards End*: "as the music started with a goblin walking quietly over the universe, from end to end. Others followed him. They were not aggressive creatures; it was that that made them so terrible to Helen. They merely observed in passing that there was no such thing as splendour or heroism in the world."<sup>20</sup> The heroic actions of men are undermined whether they are on the imperial side or against it. Similarly, in *A Passage to India* the narrator says:

If the world is not to her taste, well, at all events there is Heaven, hell, Annihilation – one or other of those large things, that huge scenic background of stars, fires, blue or black air. All heroic endeavour, and all that is known of art, assumes that there is

---

<sup>19</sup> "What I Believe," *Two Cheers* 69.

<sup>20</sup> *Howards End* 32.

such a background, just as all practical endeavour, when the world is to our taste, assumes that the world is all. (212)

Forster undermines the traditional antithesis of viewing existence. He suggests this through Fielding, who heroically assumes that the world is all, and Mrs Moore who in her vision suggests something heroic beyond this world. Yet the novel, which suggests a disturbing feeling similar to the one that the character Helen had experienced in *Howards End*, says ironically: "Visions are supposed to entail profundity, but – wait till you get one, dear reader! The abyss also may be petty, the serpent of eternity made of maggots. . ." (213). Furthermore, Forster undermines the authority of novel writing itself. The novel's self-deconstruction suggests that people cannot know the truth about India or the universe because they are trapped by innate 'human' limitations.

Forster's liberal humanism acts as a counter-discourse to people who do not know themselves spiritually. Forster does not represent this spirituality in a naive, transcendental way but is quite cutting about Mrs Moore as well. When she comes out of the cave she realises that the harsher reality of colonialism which she had been obscuring in her mind unconsciously does not allow for "Good, happy, small people" (210) and Christianity is ineffectual as well. On the contrary Christianity is an imperialising force used to justify colonialism. Although in many respects Mrs Moore's kindness also comes from her Christian values. Mrs Moore unconsciously realises that her "affectionate and sincere words" (161) are undermined by the greater evil of colonialism: "She lost all interest, even in Aziz, and the affectionate and sincere words that she had spoken to him seemed no longer hers but the air's" (161). Although not overtly stated in the novel, her 'mental overturn' is partly a result of her sense of guilt about colonialism. Mrs Moore's experience in the cave breaks up her relationship with Aziz in one sense, despite her intuitive trust in Aziz as expressed to Ronny: "I like Aziz, Aziz is my real friend" (111).

Mrs Moore has a mental overturn during and after her Marabar cave experience. She realises that the faith she has in Christianity (as Ronny and Fielding have in their

jobs) is misplaced. She realises that her Christian faith as a symbol of love to counteract Ronny's unpleasant imperialism is not effective. She believed in a benevolent relationship between Britain and India: "Because India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other. God . . . is . . . love" (70). However, she finds later that she cannot even love Aziz. Similarly, in response to the racism of the English ladies, "Why the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die", her defence had been said "with a 'gentle but crooked smile': "How if he went to heaven?"(48). Now she is sceptical of saying anything at all: "'Say, say, say,' said the old woman bitterly. 'As if anything can be said!'" (205). The novel's attitude to the form that Mrs Moore's mental overturn takes is ambiguous. Her passive withdrawal had started even before the Marabar: "Ever since Professor Godbole had sung his queer little song, they had lived more or less inside cocoons. . . ." (145). The novel makes a point of suggesting that Mrs Moore "had always inclined to resignation" (212). However, she does feel a frustration and realises the ethical implications of her passivity. Her impotency comes partly as a result of her overwhelming spiritual experience in which she senses her complicity in the imperial project and also of a frustration with the futility of action in general. Her disillusionment is personal as well as political: "she realized that she didn't want to write to her children. . . ." (161). The personal, the spiritual and the political are all tied up together as concerns her experience.

Forster seems to approve of this withdrawal partly because imperialism is the result of a false consciousness about one's 'duty' or even one's involvement in the colonial project (England's sense of duty to India is false) which leads to injustice. The disgust and disillusionment that she feels is justified but it comes at a price because she does not do anything to help Aziz (she could have stayed and been a character witness for him but instead she left the country). This ambiguity reflects Forster's dilemma with liberal humanism's helplessness: "a spiritual muddledom . . . we can neither act nor refrain from action. . . ." (212). Yet, Mrs Moore intervenes in the trial as a spiritual force – or does she? The Indian pronunciation of Mrs Moore – 'Esmiss Esmoor' indicates a

self-projection by the Indians but the adaptability of her name also rightly suggests her sympathies with India. She is admired in terms of her consciousness changing as she is the only character in whom such a change is visible. Furthermore, Mrs Moore's failure to help Aziz is not only a result of her apathy but also her cynicism of British justice. She reveals this scepticism in her outburst: "I have nothing to do with your ludicrous law courts,' she said, angry." (206). However, she does feel guilty as she sees her non-participation as an evil of a kind. Mrs Moore's retreat is political because it is inspired by a disgust for colonialism and this is an important message. Her withdrawal may not be practical in the world and it may indicate Forster's passive liberalism but it is a political statement against colonialism all the same. Even if her expression of guilt is distorted her moral awareness as compared to the moral blindness of the colonialists is suggested:

A bad old woman, bad, bad, detestable. I used to be good with the children growing up, also I meet this young man in his mosque, I wanted him to be happy. Good, happy, small people. They do not exist, they were a dream. . . . But I will not help you to torture him for what he never did. There are different ways of evil and I prefer mine to yours. (210)

This has changed from the more positive but perhaps illusory message of: "The sincere if impotent desire wins His blessing. I think everyone fails, but there are so many kinds of failure. Goodwill and more goodwill and more goodwill" (70-71).

Said believes that Forster is naive to think that the Empire will give India her independence out of goodwill. He remarks: "No more than Forster could Thompson grasp that – as Fanon argued – the empire never gives anything away out of goodwill. It cannot *give* Indians their freedom, but must be forced to yield it as the result of a protracted political, cultural, and sometimes military struggle that becomes more, not less adversarial as time goes on."<sup>21</sup> Said does not perceive Forster's irony in the novel:

---

<sup>21</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 249.



“goodwill plus culture and intelligence – a creed ill-suited to Chandrapore. . .” (80). Forster is suggesting that ‘goodwill’ is not something that will work effectively in India or in the political situation.

The novel further questions Mrs Moore’s experience by questioning its extremity. The novel is sceptical of its own scepticism directed towards liberal humanism. It realises that it would be a monolithic discourse itself to see life in terms of nihilism. Discourses such as Mrs Moore’s form of liberal humanism are not totally undermined by the novel. As Mrs Moore leaves India by train, what she sees renders a sense of meaningfulness to man in the universe: “She watched the indestructible life of man and his changing faces, and the houses he has built for himself and God, and they appeared to her not in terms of her own trouble but as things to see” (213). In other words, the novel also wishes to suggest that man can be resilient despite his tendency to be self-destructive.

## Part Two

Fielding is the main representative of the liberal humanist ideology. He exhibits the humanist's four leading characteristics as Forster claims in a later essay: "curiosity, a free mind, belief in good taste, and belief in the human race. . . ." <sup>22</sup> Fielding's approach to India and life is far more intellectual than Mrs Moore's intuitive approach. In some senses Fielding might be considered a more effective example than Mrs Moore of how liberal humanist values clash with colonial ones. This is because he has a job as a principal of the local school which depends on the imperialist presence in India. Fielding is pleasant to Indians, he socialises and communicates with them on a personal level. This willingness is visible at his tea party and in official surroundings, such as, the Bridge Party where he and Mrs Moore prove to be the only English people who show a willingness to communicate with the other race and are appreciated for their efforts. He appeals to the parents of his Indian students because he has the capacity to be culturally sensitive and open-minded: "When the moment for refreshments came, he did not move back to the English side, but burned his mouth with gram" (65).

Unlike Ronny, Fielding's honesty makes him unwilling to justify colonialism by asserting simplistically that India needs the British. At least this is how he feels in the beginning. Fielding does not dehumanise Indians as his countrymen and women do. He displays an openness and frankness with the Indians he knows and he disassociates himself from the narrowmindedness of the club. <sup>23</sup> Fielding is a pragmatic man and still goes to the club to play his billiards and tennis. Although Fielding does not subscribe to the mentality of the club, the novel suggests ironically that his practical nature as displayed in his frequenting of the club to play sports results, at a later stage, in his adherence to the Empire to a greater extent.

---

<sup>22</sup> "Gide and George" [first published 1943], *Two Cheers* 220.

<sup>23</sup> George Orwell wrote in *Burmese Days* (1935): "In any town in India the European Club is the spiritual citadel, the real seat of the British power. . . ." (17).

Fielding is Forster's alter ego to an extent, but what critics often forget is that as Forster is critical of himself he is also frequently critical of Fielding. However, the author admits as does Fielding, that he is not radical in his attitude or behaviour. He accepts his rootedness in his old ways like Fielding and at the same time knows that this is a problem: "I am actually what my age and my upbringing have made me — a bourgeois who adheres to the British constitution, adheres to it rather than supports it. . . ." <sup>24</sup> Forster adds:

They may say that if there is another war writers of the individualistic and liberalizing type . . . will be swept away. I am sure that we shall be swept away. . . . We have just to go on tinkering as well as we can with our old tools until the crash comes . . . the task of civilization will be carried on by people whose training has been different from my own. <sup>25</sup>

Forster was under no illusion that his values were permanent. However, despite their contingency he had faith in them. Correspondingly, in the novel, Fielding sense that the Empire is not permanent yet his reluctance to come to terms with this encroaching reality is expressed in: "but the more the Club changed the more it promised to be the same thing. 'It is no good' . . . 'we all build upon sand; and the more modern the country gets, the worse'll be the crash. . . . Everything echoes now; there's no stopping the echo . . . the echo is always evil.' This reflection about an echo lay at the verge of Fielding's mind. He could never *develop* it" (272; emphasis added).

Fielding differs from the imperialist characters such as Ronny and Turton and he appears at least in the beginning to be participating in a counter-discourse to their imperialism. Said notes: "Fielding is also untypical: truly intelligent and sensitive. . . . Yet his capacities for understanding and sympathy fail before India's massive

---

<sup>24</sup> "Liberty in England," *Abinger Harvest* 63.

<sup>25</sup> "Liberty in England," *Abinger Harvest* 67.

incomprehensibility. . . .”<sup>26</sup> This reading of Fielding by Said is apolitical and ahistorical. Because the novel hints that in one sense India remains largely a mystery to Fielding because he is too complacent. He does not have the right attitude towards India and her colonisation. Trivedi offers a sceptical response to Fielding’s ‘untypicality’: “Barely outside the official fold and equally recognisably a type is Fielding. . . .”<sup>27</sup> For Trivedi Fielding is almost totally complicit and to say that Fielding was part of any kind of counter-discourse would be completely untrue. This chapter acknowledges Fielding’s difference from the colonial group without being naive about his complicity in colonialism, as other critics have been. It is misleading to fail to see the practical implications of Fielding’s position, such as the fact that his income is derived from the colonial situation.

Initially Fielding displays his developed heart which is a metaphor for liberal humanist values of justice, tolerance, individuality. An example of this is in the way he makes efforts to prove Aziz’s innocence when he is accused of the crime of raping an Englishwoman. His actions are portrayed by the novel as being admirable and courageous. But it also suggests that Fielding displays a limitation in the way he views the situation. The Collector makes an emotional speech in front of him about how the two races should never attempt to be intimate and how responsible he feels for Adela’s tragedy. He uses phrases like the following which convey his rallying to the banner of race: “an English girl fresh from England. . .” (174). The narrator comments ironically: “What he had said was both dignified and pathetic, had it anything to do with Aziz? Nothing at all, if Fielding was right”(174). Fielding is able to see that an innocent Indian man has been wrongly accused of raping an English girl. But, on the other hand, the novel is continually shifting in perspective. In the last quote ‘if’ suggests that he fails to see the possibility that Aziz’s alleged guilt has something to do with the Collector’s speech which exposes their racism and nationalism directed towards the

---

<sup>26</sup> *Culture And Imperialism* 244.

<sup>27</sup> Trivedi 168.

Indians. Fielding's respect for Aziz's humanity should not exclude Aziz's political reality. Fielding does not realise that Aziz's trial would not be a fair one because its foundations are corrupted by the politics of race and power. Another example which displays the novel's awareness of the partiality of British justice but Fielding's blindness to it is when Hamidullah, aware of his own and Aziz's subjugation, panics in the midst of developing a defence for Aziz and Fielding is unable to accept this: "faith did not rule his heart, and he prated of 'policy' and 'evidence' in a way that saddened the Englishman" (181). The idea that Fielding was "saddened" reflects his liberal humanist mentality which is disappointed that there is no pure faith in the individual. The novel's deliberate emphasis on "Englishman" implies that Fielding's blindness is related to his race. The novel says elsewhere that he was "Born in freedom"(183), and this privilege contributes to his inability to sympathise with Hamidullah's nervous panic which is a result of knowing that British justice in India is not impartial. Brenda Silver notes this flaw in Fielding's way of seeing things: "resistance corroborates rather than undermines the system. In his defence of Aziz, Fielding relies on the power of evidence and knowledge, which he believes will triumph, unable to recognise, as Hamidullah and the Indians do from the position of the feminised and colonised object, that even evidence and knowledge would not work to free them."<sup>28</sup>

The novel admires Fielding's humanising of Aziz as compared to his compatriots' dehumanisation of him (they refer to him by periphrasis). Similarly he treats Adela as a human being rather than a tool to be used against either side by protecting her (he refers to her by name as well, unlike the evasiveness of the colonialists). He feels that "She really mustn't get the worst of both worlds." (252). It is for this reason Fielding persuades Aziz to let her off paying the compensation money, which Aziz does finally and the novel says:

Whenever the question of compensation came up, he introduced the dead woman's name. . . he raise[d] a questionable image of

---

<sup>28</sup> B.R. Silver, "Periphrasis, Power, and Rape in *A Passage to India*," *Novel* . 22 (1988) : 99.

her in the heart of Aziz, saying nothing that he believed to be untrue, but producing something that was probably far from the truth. Aziz yielded suddenly. He felt it was Mrs Moore's wish that he should spare the woman who was about to marry her son, that it was the only honour he could pay her, and he renounced with a passionate and beautiful outburst the whole of the compensation money, claiming only costs. It was fine of him. . . . (259)

Forster is being ironic about Fielding's liberal humanism here, because Aziz, in a sense, is manipulated into ultimately forgiving Adela. Fielding is not really able to identify with the Indian side. Even when in the beginning he agrees with Hamidullah that he is on the Indian side against his own people, he is uncomfortable about it. He finds himself reluctantly adhering to the fact of being English:

The English always stick together! That was the criticism. Nor was it unjust. Fielding shared it himself, and knew that if some misunderstanding occurred, and an attack was made on the girl by his allies, he would be obliged to die in her defence. He didn't want to die for her, he wanted to be rejoicing with Aziz. (235)

Fielding's failure lies in his commitment to his race as though he was one of the herd, instead of privileging the individual. Although this is a fact he is aware of and regrets.

A further example of how the novel deconstructs Fielding's perspective and shows that it is not unquestionably the superior one in the novel is visible when Hamidullah, upon hearing news about Mrs Moore's death, insensitively proceeds to accuse her son Ronny of deliberately lying about his mother's whereabouts so that the Indian defence would lose a witness. The novel specifically points out that Hamidullah's brutality shocked Fielding the most (248). Although we admire Fielding's sensitivity, the novel suggests that Fielding's reaction is still a subjective one because Hamidullah's perspective – his anger, has also been acknowledged. Outside the text, Forster suggested in a letter to E. V. Thompson (22 June 1924) that he found fair-

mindedness dreary and that although in the novel he had been fair-minded, his deeper feeling was that the Anglo-Indians were to blame.”<sup>29</sup> This shows Forster’s awareness that fairness, politeness or sensitivity conceals the greater brutality of British colonialism which Hamidullah’s anger is directed towards.

The novel suggests that Fielding’s preference for European culture influences his superior attitudes towards India and the Indians. Fielding’s Eurocentricism makes him arrogant though guilty of the barriers between himself and his Indian friends. It also makes him perceive Indians to be like Italians. In the passage where Fielding visits the Mediterranean (277-8), the narrative voice is deliberately Eurocentric in its assertion of European values and constructions of antitheses with India and therefore it is not meant to be read completely at face value. For example, as far as Fielding is concerned, “The Mediterranean is the human norm. When men leave that exquisite lake. . . they approach the monstrous and extraordinary . . .” (278). Forster understands this desire for harmony. He seems to display this bias in the chaotic ‘Temple’ section of the novel. Forster did not like Hindu aesthetics very much, but he realised this was a subjective judgement.

After Fielding has gone to the Mediterranean and felt its harmony and seen its beauty, it seems deliberate that the ‘Temple’ section starts with the spirit of ‘disharmony’ which possesses an alleged lack of aesthetic appeal. Forster to some extent views the Hindu side of India through Fielding’s eyes but, unlike him, Forster is capable of making imaginative leaps by accepting a deeper Hindu sense of harmony and beauty:

When the villagers broke cordon for a glimpse of the silver image, a most beautiful and radiant expression came into their faces, a beauty in which there was nothing personal, for it caused them all to resemble one another during the moment of its

---

<sup>29</sup> Furbank 125-126.

indwelling, and only when it was withdrawn did they revert to individual clods. (281–282)

Here, form is not definite, beauty is of a mystical kind and the impersonal and communal are being privileged. The following description of the Mediterranean reality is juxtaposed with what is described as an Indian reality of chaos: “the harmony between the works of man and the earth that upholds them, the civilization that has escaped muddle, the spirit in a reasonable form, with flesh and blood subsisting” (278). Forster’s description of Hindu aesthetics from a liberal humanist perspective is ironic because it is tempered with the knowledge of the contingency of his views. Furthermore, he sees that ‘muddle’ has become a productive force: “They sang not even to the God who confronted them, but to a saint; they did not one thing which the non-Hindu would feel dramatically correct; this approaching triumph of India was a muddle (as we call it), a frustration of reason and form” (282).

Fielding is not able to identify or empathise with Aziz’s colonial status because he holds views which reflect his feelings of superiority over the Indians. Fielding believes in a binary opposition between Mediterranean harmony and Indian irrationality. He does not seem to understand experiences in relation to the colonial situation and rather interprets them according to his own cultural concepts. For example, “At the moment when he was throwing in his lot with Indians, he realized the profundity of the gulf that divided him from them. They always do something disappointing. Aziz had tried to run away from the police, Mohammed Latif had not checked the pilfering” (181). Partly this is a reflection of Fielding’s orientalism rather than the truth about Indians. It suggests that because Fielding is “Born in freedom”, he is unable to understand that Aziz’s behaviour is a reaction against his political suppression. Fielding sees things too ‘objectively’, not recognizing that acts on both sides are motivated by racial/political hatred and fear and thus are not always fair or rational. Fielding fails to understand what motivates ‘seemingly’ irrational acts and assumes that these are purely irrational people and, therefore, incapable of ruling themselves. Aziz runs away from the police and



Mohammed Latif begins wailing when Aziz is arrested (172). Aziz runs away out of the fear of being unjustly treated not entirely through cowardice. Mohammed Latif is reacting in fear but is partly portrayed as being pathetic as well. Trivedi comments that the novel invents limitations about the Indians, instead of seeing Fielding's limitations of perception: "In place of any narratorial comment on Fielding as a self-confessed political simpleton, what we get next from Forster is, on the other hand, another little orientalist discourse. . ." (182). For example this is visible in the novel when Fielding asks the question: "Are Indians cowards? the narrator answers "No", but it qualifies this orientalist stereotype voiced by Fielding for one of its own: "but they are bad starters, and occasionally jib" (182).

Furthermore, Fielding's and the novel's intercultural communication with Indians are ambiguous. Mrs Moore and Fielding attempt to create an alternative space for friendship in the colonial situation, but they have limited success. However, an occasional odd harmony is achieved. Fielding perhaps achieves something similar to Forster in his own travels to the East: "And did I do any good? Yes, I did. I wanted to be with Indians, and was, and that is a very little step in the right direction."<sup>30</sup> Intercultural communication is difficult between Aziz and Fielding because of their different racial identities and because they belong to different political sides in the colonial reality. If critics fail to see this awareness about Fielding and Aziz's friendship, it is because they are still subscribing to the caricature of Forster, that is, that he blindly privileges personal relations and individuals over everything else. But as Sara Suleri points out: "Even as the narrative explores mythologies of colonial friendship, it is resolutely critical of an "only connect" rhetoric. . . ."<sup>31</sup> Forster realises that the political question of colonialism is so serious and pressing that even personal friendships have to be sacrificed. Fielding acknowledges their personal and individual desire to be friends,

---

<sup>30</sup> "India Again," *Two Cheers* 322.

<sup>31</sup> Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric Of English India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993) 132-133.

“It’s what I want. It’s what you want” (316). However, this is an artificial refuge from the political reality and Aziz refuses him. Only when Britain leaves India can they be friends because he has experienced distrust in his relationship with Fielding, as a result of unequal relations of power.

In one exchange between Fielding and Aziz, Aziz becomes defensive, thinking that Fielding was trying to suggest he was inferior but the novel says that a gulf divided Fielding’s comment from the kind that was typical of Mrs Turton’s:

You can talk to Miss Quested about the Peacock Throne if you like – she’s artistic, they say.’

Is she a Post-Impressionist?’

“Post-Impressionism indeed! Come along to tea. This world is getting too much for me altogether.”

Aziz was offended. The remark suggested that he, an obscure Indian, had no right to have heard of Post-Impressionism – a privilege reserved for the Ruling Race, that. (84)

He does not perceive what it was that insulted Aziz: “Fielding saw that something had gone wrong, and equally that it had come right, but he didn’t fidget, being an optimist where personal relations were concerned. . .” (84). Fielding fails to identify with Aziz’s colonisation. He fails to see that it is not good enough to merely be optimistic about personal relations but it is necessary to be more sensitive to Aziz’s suspicions as a result of being a colonised subject. The novel is ambiguous because it says it is hard for the subject race to do anything else but generalise (36). It blames Aziz’s suspicious mind for the misunderstanding but it also accepts the fact that Fielding lacks political consciousness. The narrator says ironically: “the respect and courtesy Fielding himself enjoyed were unconscious acts of propitiation” (182). Similarly, when Fielding visits Aziz in his house, Aziz, unconsciously aware that Fielding is a member of the colonial race, says to him: “You may look round the whole of my bungalow now, and empty everything” (129). Aziz senses Fielding’s encroachment onto his space or, in colonial language, his invasion. Personal space becomes political in the colonial situation.

Fielding's presence in the country is resented by Aziz. He would like Fielding to live with him in a personal sense: "He wanted Fielding to 'give in to the East', as he called it, and live in a condition of affectionate dependence upon it" (258). Fielding cannot do this, for racial and political reasons; firstly, he is English ('something racial intruded' ; 259) and not altogether apolitical either. The reason why some critics accuse the novel's ending of orientalism is that they say Forster creates fixed racial identities which keep the Orient and Occident apart. For example: "For Forster, Fielding and Aziz, his two creations, were eventually kept from friendship by being separated by their mythical 'Englishness' and 'Indianness' respectively. . . ." <sup>32</sup> This is not an example of orientalism but a realistic situation due to the political limitations that exist. Fielding would never do something that made him feel powerless, so how can he expect Aziz to automatically accept this friendship. Neither will accept each other's morality because a power struggle is involved. A compromise on either side would give one power over to the other. Fielding's desire <sup>33</sup> for Aziz's friendship is deferred by the poetic evocation of Indian nature: "But the horses didn't want it . . . the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House . . . they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet, and the sky said, 'No, not there'" (316). This suggests the failure of connection between an individual Englishman and an Indian due to British colonisation of India.

Similarly, the novel's awareness of Fielding evasion of the deeper significance of things is reflected in its subversion of his 'politeness'. He is too polite to address the issue of the British in India and therefore evades the political significance of why he has a job when Indians need one by framing his answer in personal terms: "I'm out here personally because I needed a job" (124). Trivedi says that Fielding is apolitical which he very naively believes is representative of Forster himself: "As for Fielding, whom

---

<sup>32</sup> Amit Chaudhuri, "Bankura's Englishman," rev. of *Alien Homage: Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore*, by E. P. Thompson, *London Review of Books* 15.18 1993: 11.

<sup>33</sup> See 'Forster's Imperial Erotic' in Sara Suleri's book, *The Rhetoric of English India*

many commentators have read as being Forster's own spokesman in the novel, he seems to suffer from a kind of congenital disability to focus on politics."<sup>34</sup> Trivedi is correct in suggesting Fielding's apolitical nature. Fielding's politeness is merely an evasion of the truth that he contributes to colonialism through his employment in the colonial administration. The character Margaret in *Howards End* admits more honestly that her economic comfort derives from imperialism: "If Wilcoxes hadn't worked and died in England for thousands of years, you and I couldn't sit here without having our throats cut. . . . More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it."<sup>35</sup> Fielding's political beliefs become more explicit towards the end. The novel says: "Fielding had 'no further use for politeness,' he said, meaning that the British Empire really can't be abolished because it's rude" (314). Hamidullah realises from the beginning that Fielding will eventually be lost to the logic of Empire: "They come out intending to be gentlemen, and are told it will not do. Look at Lesley, look at Blaikston, now it is your red-nosed boy, and Fielding will go next" (34). Mrs Moore's 'political consciousness' in some ways seems more developed than Fielding's. She notices Miss Derek's economic exploitation of India: "Miss Derek is most unsatisfactory and restless, always in a hurry, always wanting something new; she will do anything in the world except go back to the Indian lady who pays her"(167). On the contrary, Fielding's opinion of Miss Derek is evasive or politically irresponsible: "Fielding, who didn't dislike Miss Derek. . ." (167).

Ebbatson paraphrasing Lionel Trilling says: "There is an essential irony in Forster's writing which defuses a typical liberal tendency to complacency."<sup>36</sup> Forster's liberal humanist heroes and heroines desire to be apolitical (in some ways) and they do uphold a passive liberalism. This is similar to Forster's attitude but my argument is that his ironising of the liberal humanist tendency to be complacent is political. In *A*

---

<sup>34</sup> Trivedi 182.

<sup>35</sup> *Howards End* 164.

<sup>36</sup> Ebbatson, and Neale 19.

*Passage to India*, he realises the limitations of this kind of liberalism in which the public life was not able to mirror the private and that to some degree they did remain two different worlds and as his characters chose the private world over the public, this led to a complacency about politics in the public sphere:

In their own fashion they [Margaret and Helen] cared deeply about politics, though not as politicians would have us care; they desired that public life should mirror whatever is good in the life within. Temperance, tolerance, sexual equality were intelligible cries to them; whereas they did not follow our Forward Policy in Tibet with the keen attention that it merits, and would at times dismiss the whole British Empire with a puzzled, if reverent, sigh.<sup>37</sup>

Their kind of acceptance of imperialism is characteristic of Fielding's complacent attitude in which "He did not mind who he taught: public-school boys, mental defectives and policemen . . . and he had no objection to adding Indians" (79). The ironic tone problematises Fielding's acceptance in his mind of the marginalised position of Indians. Similarly, Fielding expects Aziz to accept the British presence in India with their exclusionary clubs and to compromise by building a club for Indians themselves: "Why don't you fellows run a club in Chandrapore, Aziz?" (85). This would create a similar apartheid situation to that witnessed in the Bridge Party where the English and Indian groups collected on opposite sides. Aziz's response which is interrupted by the arrival of Mrs Moore and Adela anticipates the time when he will regain his voice. By his silence Aziz is making a political statement. It is a negation of the British presence and Fielding's assumptions and an expression of a hope that the British will leave India some day. The elision in the following is an example of the novel's deconstruction of the permanency of the colonial situation: "'Perhaps – some day. . . Just now I see Mrs Moore and – what's her name – coming'" (85). And yet Aziz's postponement of this

---

<sup>37</sup> *Howards End* 28.

political problem is significant too and this tendency will be discussed in Chapter Three.

The reality of Fielding's 'apolitical' consciousness is reinforced by the novel's deconstruction of his labelling of Indians and India in terms of 'muddle' and 'mystery'. It sees these terms for what they really are and for what purposes he uses them. Fielding says: "A mystery is only a high-sounding term for a muddle" (86). He fails to see that India is both 'muddle' and 'mystery'. By calling it muddle, it reinforces the colonial belief that India needs the help of the British Empire. To feel the 'mystery' would be to make oneself vulnerable to a 'mental overturn' which would make one less arrogant that one could control India and result in a sympathy and respect for the colonised or a sense of guilt with your own complicity. But Fielding and Ronny continue to be blind and instead Fielding opts for an equilibrium. The novel says: "to cool himself and regain *mental balance* he went onto the upper veranda for a moment, where the first object he saw was the Marabar Hills" (197; emphasis added). It is counter-productive from the perspective of the colonialists to dig beneath the surface and face the reality of repression that lies underneath. The novel deliberately juxtaposes Fielding's desire for 'mental balance' with his inability to know the message of the Marabar Hills. This reveals the tension inside Fielding – the resistance of the 'truth' by his rational mind because of the need for control. The novel continues poetically: "Lovely, exquisite moment – but passing the Englishman with averted face and on swift wings. He experienced nothing himself; it was as if someone had told him there was such a moment, and he was obliged to believe" (197) The 'lovely, exquisite moment' that Fielding fails to perceive is symbolic of his failure to understand the significance of the Marabar which points to an exploitative colonial system and he is not able to see his own participation in this enterprise. His interpretation of the events that take place in the Marabar show his lack of comprehension. He tries to make sense of Adela's experience in the cave without acknowledging its connection with an anti-colonial message. He asks himself a series of questions, the nature of which suggest that he thinks the answers are located in external evidence: "What miscreant lurked in them, presently to

be detected by the activities of the law? Who was the guide, and had he been found yet? What was the 'echo' of which the girl complained?" (197). But the novel's critique of Empire is symbolised by the echo and the negative experience Adela has in the caves. In this respect, the novel is anti-colonial in its deconstruction of India's 'muddle' and 'mysteriousness'. Both concepts show how colonialism is sustained by its obscurity in the minds of the characters. Fielding's blindness is contrasted with Mrs Moore's apparent vision which, ironically, turns out to be an anti-vision for India remains largely opaque. The novel is sympathetic towards its characters' limitations. The passage which portrays Fielding and Adela's inability to cope with India very well is a gentle one: "A friendliness, as of dwarfs shaking hands, was in the air. Both man and woman. . ." (262). It is about more than anti-colonialism. It is about the complexity of India which signifies a real mystery. This will be explored in Chapter Four. Fielding's sense of the instability of the colonial enterprise is made stable again because of his continued evasion. Forster is, however, aware of the political ambivalences implicit and inherent in such a situation.

As a result of Fielding's inability to change he hardens into an imperialist. Initially Fielding cannot wholeheartedly support the imperialistic enterprise because of his philosophical belief in the individual, whereas colonialism or politics in general compromises the individual. While McBryde's belief is that the English must stick together and that there is no room for the individual; Fielding's is: "I believe in teaching people to be individuals, and to understand other individuals" (132-133). The flaw of liberal humanism, however, when it is defined in terms of individualism is that it suggests that humanism can go only so far in a political situation. Protecting the rights of the individual can be at the price of choosing a political side, even the one that is more justified. This is the case for Fielding. On the other hand not being an individual and subscribing to a group mentality is Fielding's limitation as well.

In the third section of the novel Fielding plays the imperialist's role very effectively; he says arrogantly and blindly about Mau: "it is a place of the dead", but we

read earlier about the jollity of the Hindu festival. Fielding complains because he does not have that same access to Mau and therefore control of the Hindu state (Mau remains mysterious to him) which he had experienced previously in the Indian states of Mudkul and Deora. Self-satisfied, he states: “the Maharajah and Maharani wanted us to see everything” (297). Similarly, when Fielding is in Aziz’s house, Aziz feeling the anxiety of his colonisation and Fielding’s colonial presence, says to him: “You may look round the whole of my bungalow now, and empty everything” (129).

The novel is critical of a liberal humanist tendency of complacency because this attitude might harden, as it does in Fielding’s case, into an imperialistic one. During the trial period where he acted as a subversive force in supporting Aziz, “He paused, reflecting that if he had been either ten years younger or ten years longer in India, he would have responded to McBryde’s appeal” (180). This suggests how easily Fielding could be (and is) affected by the herd mentality. Ronny writes a letter to Fielding saying: “I’m relieved you feel able to come into line with the Oppressors of India to some extent” (302). This is an example of how the individual can be corrupted by the colonial system and become part of it. It is not through a sense of the injustice of racism that Fielding is less racially prejudiced than the other Anglo-Indians: “He had no racial feeling – not because he was superior to his brother civilians, but because he had matured in a different atmosphere, where the herd instinct does not flourish” (80). That kind of complacency turns easily upon itself because the foundations are not strong enough to resist colonialism. The impact of the herd instinct and nationality on Fielding seems complete in a question he asks himself: “Would he today defy all his own people for the sake of a stray Indian?” (313).

Fielding is an intelligent, sensitive man but he is unable to connect with certain truths, such as his involvement in colonialism because like Ronny he is unwilling to let go of his career and privileged and comfortable position in Indian society. Fielding is unable to have a mental overturn and become conscious of the injustice of colonialism and how he is implicated in or even supports it. This limitation is acknowledged by the



novel. It feels sympathetic about the ordinariness of its characters in coping not only with colonialism but India as well: "Were there worlds beyond which they could never touch, or did all that is possible enter their consciousness?" (261). Said's comment indicates that Forster has suggested the destabilising effect of an over-powering India on its ordinary English characters: "Despite Fielding's wonderful Bloomsbury qualities, his ability to judge charitably and lovingly, his passionate intelligence based on human norms, he is finally rejected by India itself, to whose disorienting heart only Mrs Moore penetrates, but she is ultimately killed by her vision."<sup>38</sup> However, Said makes the same mistake he accuses traditional criticism of: he fails to see it in terms of colonial politics. His comment does not recognise Forster's scepticism of Fielding's limitation in terms of his lack of political consciousness. Fielding differs from the main liberal character in *Burmese Days*, Flory, who feels a great deal of guilt about colonialism. Fielding maintains a stability that Mrs Moore (she has a nervous breakdown) and Flory (he commits suicide) are not able to. Fielding rationalizes his position in India by saying "I have never felt more happy and secure out here. I really do get on with Indians, and they do trust me. It's pleasant that I haven't had to resign my job. It's pleasant to be praised by an L.-G. Until the next earthquake I remain as I am " (261). He is complacent about his position, never questioning that his security comes at the Indians' expense. Like Ronny, he also has faith in his utility value, he believes in his role in the civilising mission: "To slink through India unlabelled was his aim. Henceforward he would be called 'anti-British', 'seditious' – terms that bored him, and diminished his utility" (183). The colonial attitude of the civilising mission is visible when Fielding inspects Godbole's school. Upon discovering that it had lapsed into a granary, a place which would better serve agricultural villagers, he arrogantly assumes that this is the result of a characteristic Indian slackness.

Fielding becomes even more entrenched in the Anglo-Indian community (he was a free spirit of a kind in the beginning) when he is married. Pure liberal ideals of

---

<sup>38</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 244.

education for education's sake are no longer possible, as he has a family to support: "education was a continuous concern to him because his income and the comfort of his family depended on it" (311). Fielding's role as educator makes him far more implicated in the colonial enterprise than Mrs Moore as a visitor is for example. He is principal of the little college in Chandrapore, a position which the novel mentions he obtained through influence. Fielding's job depends on Ronny's power. Fielding has the impression that Indians do not respect education, perhaps even resist it. He, therefore, becomes stronger in his conviction of the need to spread British education in India. The imparting of British education was inextricably, implicitly and endemically involved with the exercise of colonial power and domination. The development of an explicit imperialistic attitude on Fielding's part towards India by the end is a reality: "Away from us, Indians go to seed at once" (314). This reflects Fielding's feeling of superiority over Indians and his colonial belief that India needs Britain to govern her.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the political ambiguity of the novel as regards the discourse of liberal humanism and individual liberal humanists. As Andrea White comments: "Forster, Greene, Cary and Waugh in whose colonial fictions the white men were ineffectual anti-heroes, complicit in but also victims of destructive colonial situations."<sup>39</sup> Forster's self-deconstructing attitude honestly shows the limitations of liberal humanism when confronting colonialism. This makes Forster's discourse more inclusive despite the limitations it faces in its rendering of the colonized or Indian point of view. Said refers to Forster's liberal humanism as helpless. I see his ambiguity as his strength. Forster knows that the forms liberal humanism takes can be inadequate but he does not deconstruct his ideology completely perhaps because, as an artist, he feels the alternatives are often worse.

---

<sup>39</sup> Andrea White, *Constructing and Deconstructing The Imperial Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 198.

## *Chapter Three*

### Indian Nationalism

#### Introduction

Trivedi states: “The European imperialist, expansive-exploitative nationalism of the nineteenth century, often euphemistically projected abroad as a model of internationalism and universalism, met its counterpart in the twentieth century in a nationalism of an anti-colonial, resistant and mythopoeic variety.”<sup>1</sup> Chapter One has shown that Forster was very sceptical of the first kind of nationalism. As for the second kind, this chapter explores the novel’s representation of two types of resistance to British colonialism – Aziz’s nationalism and Godbole’s mysticism. However, some critics are wary of Forster’s representation of Indian nationalism, in particular they are sceptical that he even allows his Indian characters a political consciousness in the first place. This chapter will show that this view does not take into account the ambiguity of the novel’s representation of political consciousness in its Indian characters.

Said does not see *A Passage to India* as being completely devoid of a representation of Indian nationalism as it was characteristic for Anglo-Indian novels in general, as Naik, quoting Frances G. Hutchinson, claims: “The nationalist movement, to an astonishing extent, drew no response from the British imagination in India . . . .”<sup>2</sup> But, Said remains dissatisfied with what he sees as Forster’s failure to adequately imagine it. He characterises the novel’s political attitude towards this movement in such a way that the result is disempowering: “The novel’s helplessness neither goes all the way and . . . nor condemns or defends Indian nationalism.”<sup>3</sup> This reflects a typical view by current critics, who argue that the novel’s representation of Indian resistance is lame. Said says: “one cannot help feeling that in view of the political realities of the 1910s

---

<sup>1</sup> Trivedi 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Naik 149.

<sup>3</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 245.

and 1920s even such a remarkable novel as *A Passage to India* nevertheless founders on the undodgeable facts of Indian nationalism.”<sup>4</sup> Said is implying that the liberal humanist imagination failed to incorporate Gandhi for example, because it was essentially imperial in its imagination.<sup>5</sup>

The positive aspect of Said’s criticism is that it encourages us to question Forster’s assumptions. After all, to a large extent Indian nationalism is indeed seen from a liberal humanist perspective in *A Passage to India*. Liberal humanist values such as ‘sympathy’ and ‘tolerance’ rather than ‘hostility’ and ‘violence’ are privileged by the novel but are not effective for the cause of the colonised. It becomes particularly interesting when the Indian characters embody these values. In some ways the novel prefers its characters to be apolitical and resist a nationalist ideology. We have to ask the question, does the novel carry a rejection of politics in order to be ‘human’ or to satisfy liberal humanist values to the extent to which the English and perhaps more importantly its Indian characters dismiss politics and fail to resist colonialism. The liberal humanist ideology seems to create a separation between being ‘human’ and ‘political’. The novel sees it as Aziz’s vulnerability as well as a regrettable thing to be always conscious of politics: “The complexion of his mind turned from human to political. He thought no longer, ‘Can I get on with people?’ but ‘Are they stronger than I?’ breathing the prevalent miasma” (78). Similarly, at the point where Fielding and Aziz must part: “the scenery, though it smiled, fell like a gravestone on any human hope” (315). After all, what is the novel projecting as the human hope – friendship? How about the human hope for political freedom? The hope for political freedom is perhaps the message Forster does wish to convey through the final separation of Aziz and Fielding. He realises to an extent that liberal humanist values are not an adequate response to colonialism on their own, but still neither can he wholeheartedly accept nationalism as the appropriate form of resistance.

---

<sup>4</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 245–246.

<sup>5</sup> This is a caricature of Forster which ignores his strong belief in freedom. He sees Indian nationalism as part of a universal struggle against oppression. He writes in *Abinger Harvest*: “Non-Co-operation is only one aspect of a wider tendency that envelops not India in particular but all the globe—the tendency to question and to protest” 327.

Said and critics like him would have us believe that the simple fact therefore is that liberal humanism is complicit with colonialism. He assumes that this 'in-betweenness' of Forster's is an evasion on his part and therefore a weakness. In fact, Forster's politics as concerns Indian nationalism are ambivalent and this is the strength of his vision of India. The novel explores the similarities between liberalism and nationalism in their ideals of freedom, as well as their differences and also holds a healthy scepticism for both ideologies. Furthermore, Forster also sees that other political issues apart from Indian nationalism such as the Moslem-Hindu problem are important. This awareness seems to dilute the novel's anti-colonial message. In order to show this, the chapter will focus on Aziz's reluctance to be politically involved, the development of his political consciousness and his Moslem separatism/nationalism. On another level, however, and expressed in a more philosophical and idealistic manner, there is in the novel a sense of the spirit of India which is not possible to colonise in the first place and rather makes her invaders become a part of her. The chapter will argue this by focusing on the Hindu character Godbole.

## Part One

The idea that the novel has engaged in representing any sort of Indian resistance to British colonialism is unbelievable to the critic Trivedi, because he thinks that Forster does not allow his characters to be political in the first place. Trivedi's interpretation is too one-sided because the novel is ambiguous as concerns the political consciousness of its Indian characters. Trivedi comments:

In contrast with Thompson's openly and acutely problematized engagement with the politics of the Raj, a systematic denial of political awareness and implication is a part of Forster's rhetoric in *Passage*. Aziz, we are told clearly enough, "took no interest in politics" (API 108), and he remains basically apolitical even after he has been entrapped and ruined by the Raj and is obliged to flee it.<sup>6</sup>

Forster's rhetoric, or in other words his liberal humanist ideology, which according to Trivedi denies political awareness to its Indian characters, is for him indicative of the novel's colonialism. Similarly, Said sees that the novel's colonialism is contained in a nineteenth century rhetoric which portrays the natives as subordinate and dependent.<sup>7</sup> In some ways, it is the text that is limited and their accusations do have a basis. But on the other hand, these critics have depoliticised the ideology of liberal humanism and they have failed to see Forster's awareness of its limitations.

There are suggestions in the novel of the Indians being of a subordinate and dependent nature. For example, at Fielding's teaparty, when Aziz talks about the kind of ruler he would have been in the Moghul era, he is portrayed as being a dreamer and a romantic. The narrator says patronisingly that "His face grew very tender – the tenderness of one incapable of self-administration. . ." (87–88). The Indian characters themselves lack faith in their own abilities. Not only the colonial officials but Hamidullah as well. He argues that "Indians are incapable of responsibility" (145). The

---

<sup>6</sup> Trivedi 181.

<sup>7</sup> *Culture And Imperialism* 249-250.

Indians admire the British and see their culture as superior in some ways: “‘You mustn’t put off what you think right’, said Hamidullah. ‘That’s why India is in such a plight, because we put off things’”(37). This desire for India to progress to the standard of the west is expressed when Aziz says to Nureddin: “we Moslems simply must get rid of these superstitions, or India will never advance”(113). There is a sense of frustration and inferiority complex among Indians at their lack of progress and stagnation which Aziz also notes: “That’s India all over . . . how like us . . . there we are . . .”(115). The Indians display an ability to be self-critical which is perhaps a positive thing but the overpowering feeling is one of disillusionment and despair. This is suggested when Hamidullah says:

I don’t consider us spiritual. We can’t co-ordinate, we can’t co-ordinate, it only comes to that. We can’t keep engagements, we can’t catch trains. What more than this is the so-called spirituality of India? You and I ought to be at the Committee of Notables, we’re not. . . . So we go on, and so we shall continue to go, I think, until the end of time. (125)

This expresses the frustration of the Indians themselves at their inability to unify as a nation and confront the British. At the same time, there appears to be sympathy and respect for difference. When Aziz chides his children for being superstitious, the narrator says that the children were “impervious to argument, and after a polite pause they continued saying what their natures compelled them to say” (293). This is not necessarily an orientalist remark about the immutable nature of Indians but is a comment that respects their uniqueness as if it were a healthy thing. Despite their tradition there seems to be a faith in Forster that they do have the capacity to oust the British. Aziz has faith that India’s future lies in the hands of the younger generation. On the last page, he says to Fielding: “If I don’t make you go, Ahmed will, Karim will . . .” (316).

Said interprets the Indians’ desire and nostalgia for intimacy and friendship with the English as being indicative of their dependent and subordinate behaviour. The novel however, derives a more ambiguous meaning from the relationship between the more

sympathetic British and the Indians. Forster invests his Indian as well as his main English protagonists with liberal values of tolerance, kindness, sympathy, friendship which the novel upholds ambiguously. As seen in Chapter One, he criticises the lack of liberal values in the colonialists, whereas he is more sympathetic with the Indians who display them. Ralph Crane agrees that the Indian tolerance of the English reflects a strength rather than a weakness: "his [Aziz's] meeting with Mrs Moore in the Mosque, is deliberately organised to give a positive impression of the Indians, and in particular their tolerance of the British. When the British are introduced, on the other hand, no such tolerance of Indians is in evidence. . . ." <sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, this also seems to reflect an inadequate response to British colonialism. Aziz's plea for kindness from the oppressor invokes the kind of dependency that Said suggests: "no one can ever realize how much kindness we Indians need, we do not even realize it ourselves. But we know when it has been given. We do not forget, though we may seem to. Kindness, more kindness, and even after that more kindness. I assure you it is the only hope" (128). The novel uses Fielding to show the irony of Aziz's 'dependency'. Fielding is willing to give "Kindness, kindness, and more kindness - yes, that he might supply, but was that really all the queer nation needed? Did it not also demand an occasional intoxication of the blood?" (129). Fielding senses that India as a nation needs more than what he can supply. Aziz is being weak-minded in a political sense when he seeks affection.

Fielding is sceptical of this 'weakness' in Aziz. Yet, although Fielding displays a greater awareness of what India needs than Aziz does, suddenly the novel places Fielding in a weaker position because he confronts an incomprehensible India which can only be made 'comprehensible' to him either through a nationalist or mystic Indian perspective, which are both unavailable to him as a liberal and Britisher. Fielding, although in a dominant position of power at present, is sensitive enough to perceive that the temperament of India is changing in such a way that it will become intolerant of his

---

<sup>8</sup> Crane 80.



liberal values thus placing him in a weaker position in the future. In other words, he senses that he needs to see things through an Indian perspective to really have power.

The novel suggests that Fielding fails to recognise alterity: "Experience can do much, and all that he had learned in England and Europe was an assistance to him, and helped him towards clarity, but clarity prevented him from experiencing something else" (129-130). The alterity Fielding misses out on recalls the comments of Masood to Forster, Forster's closest Indian friend on whom Aziz's character is partially based. He said: "As for your damned countrymen, I pity the poor fellows from the bottom of my heart, and give them all the help I can."<sup>9</sup> Even Aziz, who lacks the self-assurance and cynicism of Masood, has a sense of the helplessness of the English in India. Aziz says of the British: "he knew at the bottom of his heart that they could not help being so cold and odd and circulating like an ice-stream through his land" (88). The English are 'efficient' rulers but they are helpless because their rationality and understanding of the world is not capable of understanding India. The Empire's demise is a result of its inability to come any closer to understanding India and her people. The undeveloped hearts of the English are antithetical to Aziz's developed heart which tells him: "We can't build up India except on what we feel" (128). Aziz senses that if India is to be a nation she needs to be built on the right foundations and the British do not provide them. This reveals that Aziz is a politically aware character contrary to Trivedi's belief. Aziz realises the hopelessness of "all these reforms . . . and official parties where the English sneer at our skins" (129). Fielding's liberal response to this is "I know, but institutions and the Government don't" (129). As an individual he might know this but he is helpless to do anything about it. Aziz suggests, as the novel does generally, that the change must first occur in the heart, which it does not even for Fielding.

There is the suggestion that liberal values such as 'kindness', 'goodwill', experienced occasionally between the English and Indian, are inadequate in an era of the struggle for independence and the Hindu-Moslem clash. When Forster revisited India in 1945, he was even more convinced of their limitations: "Goodwill is not

---

<sup>9</sup> "India Again," *Two Cheers* 286.

enough . . . In fact, at the present moment goodwill out there is no use at all.”<sup>10</sup> He said: “The big change I noticed was the increased interest in politics.”<sup>11</sup> Modern India as Forster discovered was not interested in the goodwill of the English, it was too late for that. Now interest was concentrated on issues such as the choice of a national language and the Hindu-Moslem problem. He was troubled by the single-minded focus on politics as he sensed the compromise at the expense of other things that he valued like art and personal relationships (Aziz has been created as possessing these values as well) that this focus resulted in. Thus, while Forster was sympathetic to this intoxication of the Indian blood with politics, he did not totally approve of it. To him it was beginning in the wrong way and neglecting a great deal. At the same time, Forster held this perspective at a very crucial time for India (just two years before she actually became independent) because he had the luxury of coming from a privileged position (he was not fighting for his freedom).

Other Indian characters seem to suggest the Indian dependency on the English. Their present situation of powerlessness causes them to regard the past as a time when friendship with the English was possible, but only in England. Hamidullah nostalgically says: “But take my case – the case of Hugh Bannister. Here is the son of my dear, my dead friends, the Reverend and Mrs Bannister, whose goodness to me in England I shall never forget or describe. They were father and mother to me. . . . They entrusted all their children to me – I often carried little Hugh about . . . and held him in my arms above the crowd”(35). Although this description descends into sentimentality, it nevertheless makes the point that to be trusted by the English is important to them. The same kind of appreciation is felt by Aziz when the English ladies go on the expedition with him without Fielding. We should notice the novel’s irony here. The relationship Hamidullah had with the Bannisters is similar to the relationship between India and England – India the child and England the mother represented by Queen Victoria. For the subject race small gestures of kindness were significant, even if genuine intimacy

---

<sup>10</sup> “India Again,” *Two Cheers* 322–323.

<sup>11</sup> “Syed Ross Masood,” *Two Cheers* 315.

was an illusion. The desperation of the subject race is suggested when Hamidullah says: “Oh yes, we were once quite intimate. He has shown me his stamp collection” (34) and Mahmoud Ali remembers: “She offered me a lozenge when the dust irritated my throat” (35). The novel shows that there is a resistance amongst the Indians themselves also against a modern reality which is encroaching fast on them. The ‘modern reality’ is such that friendship and intimacy with the English no longer remain an adequate response to colonialism. The novel draws attention to a darker reality: “The gleam passed from the conversation, whose wintry surface unrolled and expanded interminably” (36). This ominous line suggests that while this conversation is light hearted, the gulf between the Indian and the English will get more serious. These words seem to anticipate change.

Trivedi with the character Hamidullah in mind claims, that not only Aziz but: “Other characters, too, in *Passage* seem to shun politics as the plague.”<sup>12</sup> Trivedi is unaware of the novel’s irony of Hamidullah’s reluctance to being seditious, the novel acknowledges that his attitude did not allow for any change as concerned their political suppression: ““On the one hand he always does this, on the other it may be a serious case, and you cannot know,’ said Hamidullah, *considerately paving the way towards obedience*” (38; emphasis added). Trivedi does not notice that Hamidullah’s shunning of politics could also be due to his weariness and disillusionment of it. He is dissatisfied with politics becoming so much part of his life, and nostalgically reflects: “How happy he had been there, twenty years ago! Politics had not mattered in Mr and Mrs Bannister’s rectory. . . . Here all was wire-pulling and fear. Messrs Syed Mohammed and Haq – he couldn’t even trust them, although they had come in his carriage, and the schoolboy was a scorpion” (120). But this is not simply a negative representation of Indian politics: it is the novel being ambiguous by making Hamidullah see how vicious politics can become while at the same time he realises the necessity of being political: “He was glad that Aziz . . . took no interest in politics, which ruin the character and

---

<sup>12</sup> Trivedi 108.

career, yet nothing can be achieved without them” (120). Thus this proves that Hamidullah has political consciousness contrary to what Trivedi says.

Generally the novel is unsympathetic to characters who see everything in political terms. Its idea of ‘extreme’ is an ideological construct as well. Not a great deal of attention is given to the ‘extreme’ points of views. For example, the novel opens with Aziz’s Moslem friends coming to the conclusion that the Indians and English cannot be friends in India. This represents the extreme political point of view: “they were discussing as to whether or no it is possible to be friends with an Englishman. Mahmoud Ali argued that it was not, Hamidullah disagreed, but with so many reservations that there was no friction between them” (33). Hamidullah however is represented in the novel as being balanced compared to Mahomed Ali although he becomes cynical to a greater degree later on. Another extreme character in the novel is “Amritrao, a Calcutta barrister, who had a high reputation professionally and personally, but who was notoriously anti-British” (182). During the trial, when both sides are fired up in nationalistic terms, the Indian side choose Amritrao to defend Aziz: “Amritrao was loathed at the Club. His retention would be regarded as a political challenge” (182). The narrator appears to reproach Mahommed Ali for his cynical views of the Bridge Party: “they *infected* some who were inclined to a *healthier* view” (64; emphasis added). The ‘trouble maker’ is not particularly liked by the novel which suggests a veiling of conflict in the novel generally? For example, is there something inadequate in Aziz’s response at a politically symbolic moment (after he has been acquitted) of potential conflict: “affection was all that he felt in the first painful moments of his freedom. “Why isn’t Cyril following?” (236). The novel is suggestive here of Aziz’s continuing dependency. It seems that the novel does not quite imagine India’s future as yet. At the same time, it is not merely being complacent about its liberal humanist ideology. The novel’s irony is shown by the fact that Fielding is not following Aziz which foreshadows Aziz’s breaking away from Fielding at the end.

*A Passage to India* is not complacent about the liberal humanist ideology because while it sees Aziz’s ‘dependency’ on the kindness, goodwill and sympathy

from liberal minded characters as a positive thing, it also sees flaws in this liberal ideology. There is a sense that Aziz has been seduced by these values. For example, after his sympathetic encounter with Mrs Moore in the mosque, she invites him to the club and Aziz says to her: “‘Indians are not allowed into the Chandrapore Club even as guests,’. He did not expatiate on his wrongs now, being happy” (45). In a sense Mrs Moore’s respect for Aziz and his religion is a positive alternative to the lack of respect that the club ladies showed Aziz when they ignored his presence and took his tonga without thanking him. Her kindness however should not act as a compensation for the ‘wrongs’ against him, which are symbolised by the English ladies’ ‘violent’ appropriation of his tonga and his violent exclusion from the club. Aziz’s seduction by the kindness of some English individuals blinds him to the reality of colonialism and its abuses.

Similarly, Aziz’s and Fielding’s meeting in Aziz’s house, though congenial, sympathetic and representative of the most successful relationship between an Englishman and Indian, has its drawbacks. Suleri suggests the problem of communication that exists in a relationship where one person is more powerful than the other as a result of belonging to the ruling race: “The kindness with which Fielding agrees to conduct his reading of the subcontinent cannot claim exemption from the violence of cultural intrusiveness. . . .” The novel suggests that despite the individual behaviour and personal intercourse of Fielding and Aziz, they cannot escape the ‘violence’ of colonialism. It is visible in their cross-cultural communication. The expedition to the Marabar is Aziz’s hopeless attempt to achieve intimacy with Fielding, Mrs Moore and Adela. This picnic expresses his desire to create an alternative space for him and his English friends: “This picnic is nothing to do with English or Indians; it is an expedition of friends” (170). The novel portrays this statement as being unrealistic on a deeper level: “He felt insecure and also unreal” (141). He realises too late that despite their kindness and sympathy they are part of the ruling race. Aziz says: “Damn the English even at their best. . . .” (164) after the violence of Adela’s cultural

---

<sup>13</sup> Suleri 143.

intrusiveness – “Have you one wife or more than one?” (164). Adela does not acknowledge a changing India which is typical of the English. Similarly, Fielding observes: “the more the Club changed the more it promised to be the same thing” (272). This leads to the most violent colonial act in the book – Adela accuses Aziz of rape.

The fact that much of the attempted communication breaks down suggests that although Forster is interested in the bridge between East and West, he is aware that the modern political reality of India will not allow it. This is why the novel ends vaguely – “No, not yet, and the sky said, ‘No, not there’” (316). Critics have suggested that Forster put this in a mystically arched time because he did not want to accept the reality. The novel is aware that the focus of modern India has changed. This change is explained in the following:

The objectives of Gandhi’s early Satyagrahas were to break down the economic, caste and religious differences that existed within the Indian community. The Nationalist Movement’s agenda was to build genuine bridges between the Indian communities, rather than to dismantle the bridges that existed between East and West.<sup>14</sup>

Forster faced a similar position of helplessness as Fielding as there was no place for the liberal man in modern India. Crane makes a comparable point: “However, whilst a person like Fielding . . . may try to bridge the gaps between East and West, the Gandhi men in Rao’s novel [*Kanthapura*], and perhaps Forster’s Aziz and Jhabvala’s Nawab [*Heat and Dust*], ultimately wish to widen the gaps. The bridges that Gandhi men want to build are bridges that draw the various Indian communities together.”<sup>15</sup>

The series of failures in genuine communication lead to a developing political/nationalist consciousness in Aziz. The development of political consciousness in Aziz and within India in general is displayed in the fact that their tolerance of the English, even their desire for their presence, later hardens into a political awareness and

---

<sup>14</sup> Crane 75-6.

<sup>15</sup> Crane 99.

a desire for their departure. The novel shows Aziz undergoing a learning process. As it suggests elsewhere: “The original sound is harmless but the echo is always evil.” Now that Aziz has had more experience of British ill-breeding, his attitude is: “We wanted to know you ten years back – now it’s too late” (315).

But just as the novel reflects an ambivalence concerning liberal values, it also displays an ambiguity about nationalist values. Aziz’s developing political consciousness is still subject to scrutiny. To become politically aware is to become less naive and there is a regret in Aziz’s lament: “Everyone was my friend then”(273). Aziz loses a tenderness which the novel appreciates although is ironic and partly patronising about. Aziz’s hardening leaves him no longer vulnerable to the seduction of Adela’s superficial interest in him and India. He realises that “This pose of ‘seeing India’ which had seduced him to Miss Quested at Chandrapore was only a form of ruling India; no sympathy lay behind it. . .” (301). On the one hand, the novel believes that Aziz’s anger towards those whom he perceives to be unsympathetic to his oppression is justified. On the other hand, it is sceptical of Aziz’s rejection of Adela and his hatred of the English. Said is critical of this scepticism of the novel which according to him is revealed in its suggestion that “people like Aziz will let themselves be seduced by jejune nationalist sentiment. . . .”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Suleri describes the ‘transformation’ in Aziz as a result of the ‘failed’ friendship with Fielding: “Friendship thus functions as the conduit or the Marabar Cave that allows Aziz to transmogrify from a racial into a nationalist entity. . . .”<sup>17</sup> Aziz’s attitude has now become bitter: “And, though sometimes at the back of his mind he felt that Fielding had made sacrifices for him, it was now all confused with his genuine hatred of the English” (289-290). While the novel is sceptical of Aziz’s ‘apolitical’ consciousness, it is also sceptical of his nationalist development because in this instance Aziz is not taking into account Fielding’s sacrifice during the time of his imprisonment. Aziz believes Fielding and Adela have stolen his money together: “yet these rupees haunted his mind, because he had been tricked about them, and allowed them to escape

---

<sup>16</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 245.

<sup>17</sup> Suleri 133-134.

overseas, like so much of the wealth of India" (277). Again, the novel suggests that Aziz's mistrust is not justified because he is mistaken. Furthermore, the narrator makes an orientalist remark, which seems to reflect Forster's bias: "Suspicion in the Oriental is a sort of malignant tumour . . ." (276). At the same time, it suggests that although Aziz is blinded by his bitterness his anger against Fielding is not completely unjustified because the links between the 'individual' and 'Empire' cannot be so easily erased; that is, Fielding's presence and his holding of a job in India is a reminder to Aziz of his country's wealth not being shared among Indians.

In the very end Aziz challenges Fielding with a 'violent' nationalist exclusion similar to that which Aziz faces in his own country from the British: "India is for Hindu, Moslem and Sikh, no foreigners of any sort!" (315). Furthermore: "'we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then' – he rode against him furiously – 'and then,' he concluded, half kissing him, 'you and I shall be friends'" (316). Aziz displays a nationalistic violence as well as affection. However, the novel is sceptical of the 'liberal humanistic ideal' of friendship, Fielding makes a plea to Aziz: "'Why can't we be friends. now?' said the other, holding him affectionately. 'It's what I want. It's what you want'" (316) – because it knows that it is a friendship not based on equality. Yet at this point, when Aziz is claiming his freedom from the British, it is significant that this feeling of affection for Fielding still remains. Some critics think this representation is Forster's historical inaccuracy. Rather this is an example of the novel's deconstruction of Indian nationalism. It shows that liberal humanist values were still possible. Although Forster ironically adds that maybe it was possible because they were parting. As Suleri suggests, the triumph of nationalism shown in the ending is still something that they both regret: "Here, it may be productive to read the friendship of the two men less as an aborted exchange between colonizer and colonized and more as an instantiation of what Kaja Silverman calls the "double mimesis" of colonial encounter."<sup>18</sup> The colonial encounter is not necessarily played out between the imperialist and nationalist. When Aziz says the following: "'I am an Indian at last,' he

---

<sup>18</sup> Suleri 141.



thought, standing motionless in the rain” (290) it is not to be taken at face value. There is still a degree of discomfort, both in relation to the English and the Hindu in this comment. Suleri is sceptical of this claim of Aziz’s: “While characters in the text obsessively talk about what it means to be English as opposed to Indian, their discourse suggests an anxious artifice behind the desire to keep these categories intact. If both serve as accomplices in each other’s alterities, then the inevitability of colonial disempowerment is equally meted out to Fielding and Aziz.”<sup>19</sup>

There are some moments in the book where liberal values triumph and friendship is possible. That is why this novel is about more than the coloniser-colonised relationship, this ‘argument larger than’ might be considered the novel’s political weakness by Said and others. Suleri’s comment describes how this ‘alternative space’ is possible: “it is evident that Aziz is accorded a certain mobility as a racial body which allows him an exemption from his role as complete participant in the colonial encounter.”<sup>20</sup> Aziz’s location on the fringes of ‘political/nationalistic norm’ suggested by his Moslem friends, suggests his individuality. This concept of individuality is partly a liberating creed for the novel. It is liberating, as Alex Miller has suggested, in general, because “It’s a task of artists and poets and novelists to work from positions outside the horizons of political acceptability, no matter who the figures of authority are who are setting these limits. . . . It is one of the artist’s tasks . . . to challenge these limitations, and persistently to re-imagine the horizons of possibility.”<sup>21</sup> Despite the pressure on Aziz to be merely political, he is different from the others. Aziz has a poetic spirit and in this way he is different from everyone else: “The elder men had reached their eternal politics, Aziz drifted into the garden” (36). In other words, through the character Aziz Forster’s aim is to imagine a space within the colonial experience for liberal humanist values, such as friendship, which are universal. Some critics might argue that since Aziz is the novel’s main Indian character, he has a responsibility to be far more

---

<sup>19</sup> Suleri 141.

<sup>20</sup> Suleri 133.

<sup>21</sup> Alex Miller, “Chinese Connections & Disconnections,” *24 Hours* December (1993): 91.

politically involved than he is. But as an individual, Aziz has the freedom of choice not to get involved. His decision to do so should not be seen as a particularly western liberal humanist act. At the same time, the novel acknowledges that his individual freedom compromises his political freedom.

The fact that Aziz feels affection at the very moment in which he is wilfully parting from Fielding is a triumph for one aspect of liberal humanism. Aziz maintains a faith in their friendship even though his friends had encouraged him to regard Fielding impersonally and as the enemy. Like Aziz they had previously warmed to Fielding: “is it fair an Englishman should occupy one [job] when Indians are available? Of course I mean nothing personally. Personally we are delighted you should be here, and we benefit greatly by this frank talk” (124). The novel at this stage shows the Indians flirting with these politically challenging questions. Despite his friends’ protests that Aziz should not let Adela escape from paying the compensation money, he does so. Although Mrs Moore does not help him in practical terms and is easily dismissed in the minds of Hamidullah and Fielding, Aziz holds the greatest respect for her: “she had stolen to the depths of his heart, and he always adored her”(306). Mrs Moore’s friendship with Aziz perhaps reflects the type of relationship that Forster refers to in an essay which was written when he revisited India in 1945: “The only thing that cuts a little ice is affection. . . . Whatever the political solution, that can surely do no harm. But it must be genuine affection and liking. It must not be exercised with any ulterior motive. It must be an expression of the common humanity. . . .”<sup>22</sup> In spite of Hamidullah encouraging Aziz to stay in Chandrapore and agitate against the British, Aziz refuses, and he says: “There are many ways to be a man and mine is to follow my heart”. Again, here is the novel’s ‘Indian alterity’ – ‘the heart’ or liberal humanist alternative to nationalism. At this point we might remember Said’s claim that Aziz’s “antagonism to colonialism is so unacceptably silly”<sup>23</sup> ; this rightly suggests the

---

<sup>22</sup> “India Again,” *Two Cheers* 323.

<sup>23</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 246.

necessary scepticism of an ideology of the heart, of 'humanity' as opposed to the 'political'. But the novel's 'ideology of the heart' is also political.

Fielding has correspondingly been given a degree of mobility particularly in the beginning. He too is also not fully supportive of the nationalism of his countrymen. The individual and unpatriotic way in which he reacts to Adela's accusation of Aziz reflects Forster's political discourse which is reflected in his famous essay, 'What I Believe'. He says here: "I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country. Such a choice may scandalize the modern reader, and he may stretch out his patriotic hand. . . ." <sup>24</sup> Fielding disassociates himself from the club and its herd mentality and is against the nationalistic violence perpetuated either by his or Aziz's countrymen. He comes to Adela's aid, because he sees the individual being trampled upon in the fury of British nationalism. Indian nationalism is also responsible for violence directed towards the individual; this is reinforced by Aziz's defensive and sexist suggestion that Adela wanted to be raped: "Dear Dr Aziz, I wish you had come into the cave; I am an awful old hag, and it is my last chance" (252). This comment by Aziz which he gives in response to Fielding's asking of him to be merciful to Adela about the compensation money, 'hurts' Fielding (252). He is 'shocked' (248) at Hamidullah's brutal words directed towards Ronny about his attempt to get rid of his mother' so that she could not be a witness for Aziz, just after Ronny has received the news of her death; as he was 'horrified' that Adela had to pay such a high compensation (249). However, these moments of violence are experienced by Fielding only and are juxtaposed with an ironic nationalistic perspective – Hamidullah's:

He remained silent while the details of Miss Quested's occupation of the College were arranged, merely remarking to Ronny, 'It is clearly to be understood, sir, that neither Mr Fielding nor any of us are responsible for this lady's safety at Government College,' to which Ronny agreed. After that, he watched the semi-chivalrous behaviors of the three English with

---

<sup>24</sup> "What I Believe," *Two Cheers* 66.

quiet amusement; he thought Fielding had been incredibly silly and weak. . . . (248-249)

It is highly probable that Said perceives Forster's liberal humanism in the same way when he accuses it of being 'helpless'.

Aziz makes the personal choice of withdrawing from British India, where the main agitation against the British is occurring, to the Hindu state of Mau. This seems to express a characteristic sense of resignation on the part of Forster's 'apolitical characters', yet this withdrawal is significant because it helps Aziz to become more in touch with his national identity. When Aziz retires to Mau, his contact with indigenous culture inspires his own Indianness or what he considers to be 'Indian', for the novel says ironically: "He had to drop inoculation and such Western whims . . ." (289). This suggests the novel's continuing critique of the excesses of nationalism.

## Part Two

The postcolonial critic suggests that the 'colonial novel' such as *A Passage to India* evades the coloniser-colonised political relationship. For example, Said comments: "The sense that India and Britain are opposed nations (though their positions overlap), is played down, muffled, frittered away." But there are other issues at stake which the postcolonial project should be interested in. The Indian-British opposition is not the only issue, in fact the Moslems and the English understood each other better than either community understood the Hindus. *A Passage to India* says that perhaps men should not try to initiate their own unity because it challenges the spirit of the Indian earth which is full of divisions. As there are many more divisions in India than colonialism can be blamed for, then, correspondingly, nationalism cannot be an all inclusive discourse in response to India's struggles. Aziz is not merely being evasive but has a genuine point when he says there is no such thing as the general Indian. Critics feel that Aziz is not politically involved enough in a mainstream Indian national movement. The novel's reason for this is the fact that Aziz is Moslem. This means firstly, he is committed to supporting a Moslem nationalism against the British and then the Hindu. Although Aziz evolves politically when he realises the importance of his 'Indian' identity in order to overcome the opposition that exists amongst Indians themselves, the novel's 'inability' to render at the end a convincing expression of Indian nationalism is due to its awareness of Aziz's identifying of himself more as a Moslem.

Said says that "in *A Passage to India*, it is Forster's great achievement to show with remarkable precision (and discomfort) how the moral drama of contemporary Indian mysticism and nationalism—Godbole and Aziz—unfolds against the older clash between the British and Moghul empires."<sup>26</sup> In the beginning the way that Aziz tries to deal with his feeling of insecurity due to the dominant British and Hindu presence in

---

<sup>25</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 246.

<sup>26</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 228.

India, is by invoking in his dreams the Moghul period of domination: "Sometimes I shut my eyes and dream I have splendid clothes again and am riding into battle behind Alamgir. Mr Fielding, must not India have been beautiful then, with the Mogul Empire at its height and Alamgir reigning at Delhi upon the Peacock Throne?" (83). He regrets the past in which the struggle between the Moghuls and the British yielded the British the victors and made the present unstable for Moslems: "their civilization it had almost been – which scattered like the petals of a desert flower, and left them in the middle of the hills" (158).

The Indians need to assert their identity in relation to the English but also between themselves. This religious separatism results in communal politics: "Humans do not believe because above all else they wish to be good, but because above all else they wish to find a new home in the universe. . . . Communal politics links itself explicitly to the deepest psychic needs of identity enhancement and securement, beside which questions of religiously sanctioned good or bad behaviour are secondary."<sup>27</sup> The novel shows that the Moslem community experiences the need to feel more secure: "Less explicit than the call to Krishna, it voiced our loneliness nevertheless, our isolation, our need for the Friend who never comes yet is not entirely disproved" (119). This sense of marginalisation and dispossession, would not be unfamiliar to Rushdie who wrote a book of essays entitled *Imaginary Homelands*. Perhaps one could apply this concept of imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind, to explain the Moslem invention of India as one and their own. Rushdie writes about his physical and spiritual alienation from India, similarly, Aziz and his Moslem friends feel alienation mainly of a spiritual kind. Their insecurity is a result of the economic domination and general power the Hindus hold in India; Aziz complains to Fielding that "they are so subtle and immensely rich" (85). Furthermore, what is often discussed is British suppression of Indian history, one of the ways being through literary colonialism but this is something that Aziz accuses the Hindus of: "Do you know what Deccani Brahmans say? That England conquered India from them, mind, and not the Moghuls. Is not that like their

---

<sup>27</sup> Vanaik, "Reflections on Communalism and Nationalism in India," *New Left Review* 196 (Nov/Dec 1992): 56.

cheek? They have even bribed it to appear in textbooks, for they are so subtle and immensely rich” (84–85). This suggests a competition of narratives. In order to feel secure in India the Moslem community creates the myth that India is essentially Moslem. But the novel suggests that this notion is illusory:

The squalid bedroom grew quiet; the silly intrigues, the gossip, the shallow discontent were stilled, while words accepted as immortal filled the indifferent air. Not as a call to battle, but as a calm assurance came the feeling that India was one, Moslem; always had been; an assurance that lasted until they looked out of the door . . . greeted ridiculous Chandrapore, where every street and house was divided against itself, and told her that she was a continent and a unity. (118–119)

Poetry, art and religion in the Moslem community are connected to ideas of national identity. Their exclusion of Hindus is based on the fear that India does not belong to Moslems, just as the British exclude Indians in general because they want to believe that India is theirs. The novel suggests that all the communities represented in the novel – Anglo-Indian, Moslem, Hindu – uphold the following philosophy in some way or the other. The narrator says: “We must exclude someone from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing” (58). The novel is sceptical of a unifying concept of a nation and national identity, when India is divided into exclusive communities. Moslems feel fearful and resentful not only towards the British but the Hindus as well. In fact both Aziz with Moghul ancestry and Godbole of Ayran ancestry – “his complexion was as fair as a European’s” (89) – have coloniser histories. The difference between them is that the Hindus preceded the Moslems. Therefore India is no more the home of one Indian community than another. In a more positive frame of mind Aziz can see this: “As he strolled downhill beneath the lovely moon, and again saw the lovely mosque, he seemed to own the land as much as anyone owned it. What did it matter if a few flabby Hindus had preceded him there, and a few chilly English succeeded?” (45).

Aziz is initially caught in the past and is unable to come to terms with the modern political reality of India, but after the trial he sees the futility of living in the

past and becomes conscious of what is before him. He thinks to himself: "Of what help, in this latitude and hour, are the glories of Cordova and Samarkand? They have gone, and while we lament them the English occupy Delhi and exclude us from East Africa" (265). This suggests Aziz's regret about India's passivity and impotence as a nation. Furthermore, he realises that his religious separatism makes the country even more impotent: "Islam itself, though true, throws crosslights over the path to freedom. The song of the future must transcend creed" (265).

Yet there remains an ambiguity about Aziz's 'transformation'. Ralph Cronin argues that Aziz still has difficulty in accepting an India which is not monolithic: "Half closing his eyes, he attempted to love India"(119). This suggests that: "Aziz's knowledge of the land of his birth is inadequate, he blurs much that seems to him foreign, incomprehensible, barbarous."<sup>28</sup> For Aziz that which is 'foreign, incomprehensible and barbarous' refers to Hindu India. He does not like to associate India with Hindus: "Slack Hindus. . . . It is as well you did not go to their house, for it would give you a wrong idea of India. Nothing sanitary" (86). Except for the odd friendship between Aziz and Godbole the Moslems judge the Hindus using prejudiced constructs which result from ignorance similar to those which the British use when judging the Indians. For example:

Before long they began to condemn him [Godbole] as a source of infection: 'All illness proceeds from Hindus,' Mr Haq said. Mr Syed Mohammed had visited religious fairs, at Allahabad and at Ujjain, and described them with biting scorn. . . . Asked what was the name of the chief idol at Ujjain, he replied that he did not know, he had disdained to inquire, he really could not waste his time over such trivialities. (118)

The Moslems exercise a similar kind of orientalism towards the Hindus, as the British do towards the Indians in general and the Hindus in particular. Later, Aziz has a more accepting attitude, although the Hindus remain as incomprehensible to him as they are to the English. He still perceives them in an orientalist way although this time

---

<sup>28</sup> Richard Cronin, *Imagining India* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989) 266.



he privileges their alterity: “They are happy out there with their savage noise, though we cannot follow them; the tanks are all full, so they dance, and this is India” (307). Furthermore, Aziz develops a more inclusive mentality as expressed in his poems even though they remain heavily permeated with Moslem themes and concerns: “Bulbuls and roses would still persist, the pathos of defeated Islam remained in his blood and could not be expelled by modernities. Illogical poems – like their writer. Yet they struck a true note: there cannot be a mother-land without new homes” (290). In other words, India can only be a nation when Indians accept the reality that India is made up of different peoples.

Trivedi believes that “the narrator mocked Indian nationalist aspirations. . . .”<sup>29</sup> However, when Aziz, “thought, standing motionless in the rain, ‘I am an Indian at last,’” (290) there is a degree of scepticism on the novel’s part because it is aware of a complex reality. In response to Fielding’s scepticism “India a nation! What an apotheosis!” (315) – Aziz hurriedly changes his attitude from wanting India to be ruled by his Afghan ancestors to “India shall be a nation! No foreigners of any sort! Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and all shall be one!” Therefore this is not completely convincing. Suleri argues that the novel suggests that “Neither [Fielding or Aziz] can claim legitimacy over the urge to disempower. . . .”<sup>30</sup> In other words, the novel suggests that Aziz cannot adequately justify to Fielding and even to himself why the British should withdraw from India. The novel suggests Aziz’s impotence in the following: “finding he was in a corner. . . .” and “not knowing what to do. . . .” (315). Said is of a similar opinion to Trivedi that Forster is not being fair to the nationalistic desires of Indians: “Dr Aziz becomes a nationalist, but I think Forster is disappointed by him for what only seem his posturings; he cannot connect him to the larger, coherent movement for Indian independence.”<sup>31</sup> The novel characterises Aziz in this way perhaps because he is not part of a ‘coherent’ national movement, at least in any simple sense. This is

---

<sup>29</sup> Trivedi 189.

<sup>30</sup> Suleri 148.

<sup>31</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 244.

the limitation of the postcolonial critique. One can perhaps attribute to Forster a postmodern inclination as he appears to realise that the power struggle between the British and the Indians is not the only one. The novel identifies a basic and even contemporary political 'problem' of India: "every house, street divided upon itself".

Furthermore, suggesting the ambiguity of the novel's attitude as concerns unity between the Moslems and the Hindus, is its portrayal of why Aziz does not write the poem that Das (a Hindu) wants to use to symbolise unity between the two communities. According to Frances Singh this is due to one of the two reasons: "for him Indian society is divided into two groups, Hindu and Moslem. . . ." <sup>32</sup> Perhaps it is rather an indication of Aziz's political maturity that he understands that India is a heterogeneous country and impossible to define as "There is no such person in existence as the general Indian". Aziz, significantly, is against Akbar, who was the only Moghul to propose a universal religion for India but at the same time he has every right to assert his difference. Even Das, who the novel says had much mental clearness (264) does not believe that India is ready as yet for a solid unity between Hindu and Moslem. "They [Aziz and Das] shook hands, in a half-embrace that typified the entente. Between people of distant climes there is always the possibility of romance, but the various branches of Indians know too much about each other to surmount the unknowable easily" (264-65). This embrace parallels the embrace between Aziz and Fielding at the end which symbolises the potential not the realisation of unity. Some postcolonialists automatically assume that this distinction displays Forster's colonialism but rather the narrator suggests realistically that it is harder for Indians of different creeds to get along than it is for Indians and English. The inability of the Indians to mobilise themselves as a unified nationalist movement is similarly evoked in this fragile Hindu-Moslem entente which forms as a result of the Indian victory of the trial. The novel expresses the idea that unity is difficult because of 'natural' age old differences between the two communities. The two sides cannot seem to let their prejudices go. Aziz thinks "I wish

---

<sup>32</sup> Frances B. Singh, "A Passage to India, the National Movement, and Independence, *Twentieth Century Literature* 31 (1985) 266.

they did not remind me of cow-dung” and Das thinks “Some Moslems are very violent” (265).

While Aziz is considering his poem that will symbolise India’s unity he is besieged with numerous difficult problems such as: “In what language shall it be written? And what shall it announce?” (265). Such questions anticipate post-colonial problems arising from India’s heterogeneity. Questions and problems that did arise included – what will be the nation’s unifying force and what universal creed shall it follow? The novel’s use of the poem as a symbol of unity is based on reality. For example, Alok Bhalla records this event: “In 1920’s a nationalist song [‘Sar Faroshi Ki Tamamanna’] was composed which attained very wide popularity in northern India. The composer was in jail but millions have sung the song as an expression of nationalist feeling.”<sup>33</sup> This proves that India was capable of achieving unity although Aziz’s experience deals with the possibility of achievement rather than the achievement itself. He does express a desire for India’s unity to include rural Indians: “and this evening he longed to compose a new song which should be acclaimed by multitudes and even sung in the fields” (265). When Forster revisited India in 1945, he was involved in a debate on how India’s unity could be achieved through literature: “We had come to discuss literature as a unifying force. . . .”<sup>34</sup> Despite doubts there was some faith that this could happen through language: “A sense of enlargement and of complexity stole over the audience as they discussed whether, despite all these languages and perhaps through them, India could not be one” (320).

The novel’s portrayal of a largely divided India, including not only the main cleavage in Indian society between Hindu-Moslem, but between other communities and religions reflects doubts about the effectiveness of Indian nationalism. It says: “The fissures in the Indian soil are infinite. . . .” (289). The potential for conflict seems ever present between the Indians themselves:

---

<sup>33</sup> Alok Bhalla and, Sudhir Chandra. eds., *Indian Responses To Colonialism In The Nineteenth Century* (New Delhi: Sterling Pub., 1993) 224.

<sup>34</sup> “India Again,” *Two Cheers* 319.

Hamidullah had called in on his way to a worrying Committee of Notables, nationalistic in tendency, where Hindus, Moslems, two Sikhs, two Parsees, a Jain, and a Native Christian tried to like one another more than came natural to them. As long as someone abused the English, all went well, but nothing constructive had been achieved, and if the English were to leave India the committee would vanish also. (119-120)

The novel makes the assumption that the various Indian communities have no concept of nationhood or desire for unity apart from seeing it as a way to rid themselves of the British. Said is also suspicious of such a portrayal: "Forster sees Indians with imperial eyes when he says that it is 'natural' for sects to dislike one another. . . ." <sup>35</sup> The quotation above suggests the inability of the nationalistic committees to be effective in practical terms. Naik suggests a similar idea in Maud Diver's novel, *The Dream Prevails* which sums up the general Anglo-Indian thinking on this issue: "these talking Round Tables in town (that is, the Indian nationalists) that go forever round and seem to arrive nowhere. . . . But two things they can't do, with their much talking; they can't talk India into a united, independent nation, and they can't talk the British out of India." <sup>36</sup> The novel's characterisation of nationalist committees is negative and patronising. Aziz thinks: "there are only two reactions against fright: to kick and scream on committees, or to retreat to a remote jungle, where the sahib seldom comes" (289).

The trial encourages different sections of the community to respond in a nationalistic manner. The novel is partly mocking of these expressions of nationalistic fervour, seeing them as being ineffectual because in reality India is a divided nation. These divisions are in terms of gender and class as well. For example: "The sweepers had just struck . . . and sweepers . . . who felt less strongly about the innocence of Dr Aziz, would arrive in the afternoon. . . .". The novel asks further, perhaps from the perspective of the colonialists: "but why should the grotesque incident occur?" (218). Furthermore, "a number of Mohammedan ladies had sworn to take no food . . . their

---

<sup>35</sup> *Culture And Imperialism* 247.

<sup>36</sup> Naik 151.

death would make little difference, indeed, being invisible, they seemed dead already. . .” (218). The novel is attempting to suggest that as Indian women remain invisible in Indian society in the first place, their nationalistic actions count for little. When Aziz says that if their women were liberated India would never have been conquered, he admits a failing of nationalism to incorporate them in the first place. Fielding mocks this by saying, if your women were free, who would wash your children’s faces.<sup>37</sup> Despite being sceptical about these nationalistic responses the novel says “nevertheless it was disquieting. A new spirit seemed abroad, a rearrangement, which no one in the stern little band of whites could explain” (218). The novel suggests that the English are not able to explain this new force in India because they are not willing to acknowledge that India is changing. A further example of this is when the novel says: “He [Major Callendar] never realized that the educated Indians visited one another constantly, and were weaving, however painfully, a new social fabric. Caste ‘or something of the sort’ would prevent them” (72). This irrational ‘rearrangement’ may not be represented as being effective but it is acknowledged by the novel as the beginning of a developing subversive force that Forster later felt alienated from but happy about all the same: “A new spirit has entered India. Would that I could conclude with an eulogy of it! But that must be left to writers who can see into the future and who know in what human happiness consists.”<sup>38</sup>

When nationalism, whether English or Indian, becomes fanatical and violent, it is severely mocked by the novel for its absence of reason: “His [The Collector's] face was white, fanatical, and rather beautiful – the expression that all English faces were to wear at Chandrapore for many days. Always brave and unselfish, he was now fused by some white and generous heat; he would have killed himself, obviously, if he had thought it right to do so” (172). The novel presents an image of communalism which on the contrary is positive, so it is not as if Forster is simply prejudiced in favour of the

---

<sup>37</sup> Forster was interested in the absence of Indian women in Indian society. In 1945 he noted the lifting of purdah as a development in Indian society.

<sup>38</sup> “The Mind Of The Indian State” [first published 1922], *Abinger Harvest* 327. Indian nationalism was not Forster’s struggle but he was a well-wisher. He showed in *Two Cheers For Democracy* that he was aware that: “The backward races are kicking” and he wished them “more power to their boots” (55).

individual as opposed to the community: "When the villagers broke cordon for a glimpse of the silver image, a most beautiful and radiant expression came into their faces, a beauty . . . [that] caused them all to resemble one another during the moment of its indwelling. . ." (281–282). Fielding's viewpoint seems to be given as the balanced one which rejects the extremes of nationalism (as suggested in *The Collector's* expression) which are seen in terms of a madness: "He felt that a mass of madness had arisen and tried to overwhelm them all; it had to be shoved back into its pit somehow, and he did not know how to do it, because he did not understand madness; he had always gone ahead sensibly and quietly until a difficulty came right" (173). This comment by the narrator shows a further questioning by the novel of the inadequacy of Fielding's perspective (and Adela's) as concerns what is happening in India: "Were there worlds beyond which they could never touch, or did all that is possible enter their consciousness?" (261). In other words, they did not understand this world of Indian resistance, so Fielding automatically labels it as madness. The novel portrays this 'madness' as being based on emotion not rationality for both communities. Ironically the only time Anglo-India shows emotion is for a negative cause:

But the Collector looked at him sternly, because he was keeping his head. He had not gone mad at the phrase 'an English girl fresh from England', he had not rallied to the banner of race. He was still after facts, though the herd had decided on emotion. Nothing enrages Anglo-India more than the lantern of reason if it is exhibited for one moment after its extinction is decreed. All over Chandrapore that day the Europeans were putting aside their normal personalities and sinking themselves in their community. Pity, wrath, heroism, filled them, but the power of putting two and two together was annihilated. (174–175)

The Anglo-Indian reaction is most probably connected to their memories of an 1857 mutiny in which the causes of unrest were attributed to Indian madness and depravity. Forster on the contrary, locates the madness in the Anglo-Indian community. The novel suggests that the herd mentality is always dangerous. Generally, Forster has no respect for it: "man has dallied with the idea of a social conscience, and has disguised the fear of the herd as loyalty towards the group, and has persuaded himself that when he

sacrifices himself to the State he is accomplishing a deed far more satisfying than anything which can be accomplished alone.”<sup>39</sup>

Resistance in terms of violent acts is not something the novel supports. The images it evokes to describe the Indian procession formed after the trial to attack the English suggest fanaticism and evil. Forster likens the crowd to “a snake in a drain, it advanced down the narrow bazaar towards the basin of the Maidan, where it would turn about itself, and decide on its prey” (236). Furthermore: “When they reached the Maidan and saw the sallow arcades of the Minto they shambled towards it howling. It was near midday. The earth and sky were insanely ugly, the spirit of evil again strode abroad. The Nawab Bahadur alone struggled against it . . . But he too was carried over the new precipice” (237).

The novel however sees the Indians less as strident nationalists but more as a mob, an illiterate mass, lacking a coherent expression of resistance. It therefore mockingly makes potential nationalistic violence subside into a bathetic situation. Forster writes: “disaster was averted, and averted by Dr Panna Lal” (237). Dr Panna Lal is largely a fool in the novel. The association of Nurreddin’s (the nephew of the reluctant Moslem leader of the procession) appearance with the falling of the Bastille is supposed to be humorous as the rumours of his maltreatment by the English are shown to be false. The novel suggests that the effects of such nationalistic anger were similar to “a tap of silly anger on its [the Collector’s car’s] paint – a pebble thrown by a child” (217). Although the novel accepts a growing resistance, it suggests that at this point in history Indian nationalism does not develop into an effective cause after the stimulus of the trial, but rather subsides into “Loud talk and trivial lawlessness . . . and behind them continued a genuine but vague desire for education” (258).

Is this an orientalist description of nationalism or does it display the novel’s stance against violence? To describe Indian nationalism in this negative way is characteristic of the Anglo-Indian type of representation but it is also an ethical issue

---

<sup>39</sup> “The Menace to Freedom” [first published 1935], *Two Cheers* 9.

for the novel. George Orwell reflects this Anglo-Indian thinking as Forster records: “British imperialism, bad as he found it in Burma, is better than the newer imperialisms that are ousting it.”<sup>40</sup> That is why the novel is ambiguous about the Indian victory gained from Aziz’s acquittal. The novel asks, if they see the English purely as their enemies and evil, and then react in a violent way towards them, are they really justified?

John Gray is sceptical of this kind of liberal critique. He says: “nationalism, easily the most powerful political phenomena in the contemporary world, not only has no defence in principled thought, but never did. . . .”<sup>41</sup> Gray questions the assumptions of the liberal humanist discourse in its portrayal of nationalism: “The hegemony of liberal discourse and ideals . . . leaves these forces – of ethnicity and nationalism, for example, in an intellectual limbo from which they emerge intermittently as evidence of persisting human irrationality, to be dismissed as barely intelligible departures from principled thought.”<sup>42</sup> The novel has shown its scepticism of the nationalist resistance formed during and after the trial because it contravenes humanist principles, by portraying it, as Gray has pointed out, in terms of ‘human irrationality’ and ‘unprincipled thought’.

The division between the Indians, which stalls a developing nationalism, is also represented as being a result of the power structures within the Indian society. This particular power structure is one which prevents lower class Indians from agitating against and resisting the English. The rich educated elite is represented by the Nawab Bahadur who collaborates with the English out of self-interest. Ronny refers to him as: “a real loyalist” (102). An example of the Nawab Bahadur reinforcing the stereotypes of the West and of the Empire (which is a truthful caricature) is his remark “I cannot imagine that they [Hindu states] have been as successful as British India, where we see

---

<sup>40</sup> “George Orwell” [first published 1950], *Two Cheers* 60.

<sup>41</sup> John Gray, “Why the Owl Flies Late: The Inadequacies of Academic Liberalism,” rev. of *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, by Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit, *Times Literary Supplement* Oct. 15. 1993: 10.

<sup>42</sup> Gray 11.



reason and orderliness spreading in every direction, like a most health-giving flood!”(108). He eagerly accepts Turton’s invitation to the Bridge Party. Other Indians disagree with this but receive no open support for their opinions: ““You will make yourself chip,’ suddenly said a little black man” and Mahmoud Ali in response to this thinks: “Who was this ill-bred upstart, that he could criticize the leading Mohammedan landowner of the district? . . . though sharing his opinion, [he] felt bound to oppose it” (56). This critic of the Nawab Bahdur is politically aware but too scared to speak out. The Nawab Bahadur is a rich man who holds prestige and thus “The gentlemen whom he had lectured now urged one another to attend the party, although convinced at heart that his advice was unsound” (57). After the trial when the crowd became fanatical, the Nawab encourages a re-establishing of order for reasons of self-interest: “he knew that nothing was gained by attacking the English, who had fallen in their own pit and better be left there; moreover, he had great possessions and deprecated anarchy” (236). Similarly, the novel mockingly conveys the Nawab Bahadur’s participation in the rhetoric of empire: “When Nureddin emerged, his face all bandaged, there was a roar of relief as though the Bastille had fallen . . . Embracing the young man publicly, he began a speech about Justice, Courage, Liberty and Prudence . . . which cooled the passion of the crowd” (238).

The divisions in Indian society which prevents its unity or nationhood as a result of class are furthermore reinforced by the novel’s depiction of the Nawab Bahadur’s middle class consciousness. It says

He [Nawab Bahadur] had spoken in the little room near the courts where the pleaders waited for clients; clients, waiting for pleaders, sat in the dust outside. These had not received a card from Mr Turton. And there were circles even beyond these – people who wore nothing but a loincloth, people who wore not even that, and spent their lives in knocking two sticks together before a scarlet doll – humanity grading and drifting beyond the

educated vision, until no earthly invitation can embrace it. (57-58)<sup>43</sup>

The Nawab Bahadur and others inside the room are educated and those outside the room are not part of their group which shows how the Indian upper/middle class do not acknowledge the lower classes. The theme here is one of exclusion. There are so many voices in India that are not being heard that it is impossible to be unified: "India – a hundred Indias – whispered outside beneath the indifferent moon. . ." (38). The novel incorporates the different voices that exist in India but are not being heard. For example, the Eurasian, Mr Harris – the Nawab Badhur's driver: "What's it all about? Don't worry me so, you blacks and whites. Here I am, stuck in damn India same as you, and you got to fit me in better than this" (106). The problem of India goes far beyond the colonial struggle between the Indians and the English. Indian nationalism is not merely a response to the British but it is also a search for nationhood among the Indians.

Postcolonialists are adamant in their condemnation of white western colonisation of India. But Forster also points out that Indians themselves colonise each other. For example, the Nawab Bahadur's loyalty to the British keeps India under their rule. The punkahwallah in the courtroom is doubly colonised, firstly by India herself and then by a foreign nation. Not everybody has the nationalist point of view. For example, the punkahwallah is too oppressed by his own people to be conscious of his oppression by the British. He is an untouchable and his reality is that he ends up on the rubbish heap (220). Forster's novel is innovative for its time because it points out these hypocrisies in Indian society. The novel says that most of India's inhabitants do not care how she is governed – it uses the term 'lower animals' and here it could be referring to the lower classes, whom the novel suggests do not have political consciousness. Rather than this being a misrepresentation, Forster makes a significant point, that locked in a local colonisation, why would most inhabitants be aware of their

---

<sup>43</sup> The novel is not simply projecting its own middle-class centredness but it is making the significant point that the exclusion a middle-class consciousness results in is a problem in Indian society itself.

British rulers? On the other hand the novel does not represent resistance amongst the lower echelons of society. It suggests that many Indians accepted the English authority unquestioningly and had no desire to resist as they did not possess a political consciousness in the first place: "Many of the guests, especially the humbler and less anglicized, were genuinely grateful. To be addressed by so high an official was a permanent asset. They did not mind how long they stood, or how little happened, and when seven o'clock struck they had to be turned out" (64). The lower classes are far less aware of who is their oppressor: "he [the Prince] is no more incomprehensible to them [the uneducated peasants] than a hostile sky."<sup>44</sup> Forster is being truthful to reality by seeing that power is everywhere and oppression can take many forms. This is the novel's postmodern message.

---

<sup>44</sup> "The Mind Of The Indian State," *Abinger Harvest* 327.

### Part Three

Part two discussed the novel's portrayal of India as a divided country. This suggests its scepticism that India is or can in the future become a nation. This scepticism of the novel does not necessarily reflect the arrogance of an imperialist attitude, but rather the uncertainty of the reality of 'nation'. Benedict Anderson proposes the following definition of the nation which suggests its 'unreality' in a sense: "it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."<sup>45</sup> Anderson believes that Gellner makes a comparable point when he claims that "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist."<sup>46</sup> Crane adds to this argument, "In *Midnight's Children* (1981), Salman Rushdie's narrator, Saleem Sinai, tells us that in 1947, 'a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom'. Or, to put it in another way, India was invented, not for the first time, nor the last time, at the time of independence."<sup>47</sup> The narrator or Mrs Moore in *Passage* makes a similar point: ". . . she felt, quite illogically that this was not the last word on India." (70). In other words, India could be reinvented at a different point in time. Furthermore it "is wrong to see nationalism as a natural entity . . . the nation is a 'collective state of mind striving to become a political fact'. . . ." These critics suggest that India can be imagined or invented in many different ways, therefore despite the fact that India is not inherently a nation she can still become one as she did in 1947. But the reality of 'nation' also exists side by side with the reality of India's divisions. Aziz's or the Moslem idea of India as a nation is quite different from Godbole's or the Hindu sense. Part Three deals with the latter and it is significant that the idea of nation takes on religious tones because a

---

<sup>45</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983) 15.

<sup>46</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*, (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1964) 169. Quoted in Anderson 15.

<sup>47</sup> Crane 1.

<sup>48</sup> Vanaik, "Reflections on Communalism" 53.

parallel can be drawn with the aspiration for God (depicted in the Gokhul Ashtami celebration) and nation and the elusiveness of their attainability.

Part Three looks at a coherent India, one which is unified in its own way, even though a “hundred Indias . . . passed each other in its streets” (214). A nation does not necessarily have to be a natural entity: unity can be as a result of an organised system as well. The novel suggests India’s unity or coherence even if at the same time it is ironic about how this unity is achieved. The novel’s use of the words – ‘spot of filth’ suggests the power relations that exist within the caste system. Godbole’s Hindu ceremony has achieved a greater coherence than the nationalist committees as a result of the power relations but also because of a deeper spiritual connection among the village Indians: “All other music was silent, for this was ritually the moment of the Despised and Rejected; the God could not issue from His temple until the unclean sweepers played their tune, they were the spot of filth without which the spirit cannot cohere” (300). Even the least important in this caste system has in this religious ceremony a necessary part to play before God and symbolically, nation could be born.

Godbole’s Hindu ‘nationalism’ is different from that of the nationalist movement. Aziz retires to the Princely state of Mau, Godbole’s home, in order to escape the agitation against the English in British India. The Hindu mystic way of dealing with the British is to behave as if they did not exist: “for when the Indian does ignore his rulers he becomes genuinely unaware of their existence” (233). This is the mystic way. Unlike the avatars of Indian nationalism with their national committees and violent acts which the novel mostly renders powerless, it attributes a sense of power to the spirit of India. Her sudden silences and shifting to higher realms undermines and parodies the colonial discourse. Godbole is the main representative of this alterity. He represents the spirit of India that resists domination by its alternative reality. Godbole embodies ‘otherness’; he is a subversive force to religious, cultural and political imperialism primarily by the English but by the Moslems as well. At Fielding’s tea party, when the English visitors and Aziz ask him what is so different about the Marabar Caves, Godbole does not answer and this represents his resistance to

their desire to appropriate knowledge. Godbole's silence is a resisting force as is his sudden bursting out in an incomprehensible Indian song. Godbole's silences, as in this instance and on the occasion when he does not tell Aziz that Fielding had not married his enemy (which causes much misunderstanding between them), have the effect of allowing India's spiritual alterity to work upon their lives.

Godbole's silences evoke an ancient India. The novel suggests his wisdom is like encountering 'Ancient Night' in comparison to the simple mind of Aziz (92). It has portrayed the primal reality of India which is beyond divisions. The novel's sense of an essential India is one which is inclusive of all races, even the English. Rabindranath Tagore characterises this nature of India in a similar way. Trivedi summarising Tagore says that "India's 'mission' right from the beginning of history . . . was 'like that of a hostess who has to provide proper accommodation for numerous guests.' Many 'races' had come to India in the past; it was 'at last' the turn of the English now, 'and we neither have the right nor the power to exclude this people from the building of the destiny of India. . . .'"<sup>49</sup>

Islam provides a sense of social order and stability. However, given that social connections are fragile, some deeper spiritual connection is essential. It is the 'Temple' Section which shows that Hinduism recognises this. The Hindu festival is used by Forster as representative of what the British call the 'muddle' of India, but its inclusiveness may also be seen as the "fecund, harmonious disorder of creation."<sup>50</sup> During the ceremony, the two boats, one containing Fielding and Stella and the other Aziz and Ralph, collide and the Moslem and English people fall into the water at the moment when the Hindu servitor enters the waters carrying the village of Gokul upon its tray (309). The novel suggests that a symbolic unity between the different races is achieved temporarily and India's spirit is responsible for this. Momentarily their armours of difference (political, cultural and religious) have been weakened by the

---

<sup>49</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (1917: Madras: Macmillan, 1985): 3, 9, and 5, respectively. Quoted in Trivedi 72.

<sup>50</sup> Crane 84.

swirling and unifying waters of the Mau. The novel represents this event in mythical language and it suggests India as a unity, not in terms of a nation, but an ancient India that has nothing to do with divisions or the supremacy of one culture or religion over the other. In other places the novel refers to the Indian landscape which suggests an aboriginal Indianness that goes beyond differences, for example, in the description of the caves.

Aziz “focusing his heart on something more distant than the caves, something beautiful” (306) as a result of this spiritual alterity encountered in Godbole’s religious ceremony becomes more forgiving of the English people. This feeling of forgiveness encouraged by the atmosphere of religion at Mau is contrary to the nationalistic bitterness that he had felt towards his English friends in British India. This spirit evoked by Godbole’s ceremony may be a frustration of reason and form (282) which the novel is ironic about but it is the kind of irrationality that the novel sees as the possible triumph of India in terms of its freedom. This is because it is inclusive of “objects ridiculous and august”, ‘good’ and ‘evil’. It represents love and unity as opposed to the anarchy and muddle of nationalism. The wisdom of this philosophy gives India a sense of worth, force and justification not to be mastered, manipulated and transformed by the British. Inclusiveness leads to muddle but of a positive kind.

The potential for unity is usually suggested by Godbole, even unity with the English, but the novel partly remains sceptical about this. Forster displayed his scepticism of the reconciliation between East and West, when he wrote to Masood (27 September 1922): “When I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West, but this conception has had to go, my sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable.”<sup>51</sup> Godbole’s appearance represents both the novel’s hope of reconciliation and its scepticism: “The clocks matched the turban, and his whole appearance suggested harmony – *as if* he had reconciled the products of East and West, mental as well as physical, and could never be discomposed” (89; emphasis added). Godbole is used by the novel to suggest tentatively that in the future reconciliation

---

<sup>51</sup> Furbank 106.

might be possible. For the time being however, reconciliation is ultimately postponed in the novel. Aziz's reason is the political enmity between India and England: "you are Mrs Moore's son." "But you are Heaslop's brother also, and alas, the two nations cannot be friends." And Ralph Moore wisely responds: "I know. Not yet" (306).

The resistance to nationalism is evoked through a sense of perceiving the reality beyond nations. Despite Godbole's Brahmin exclusiveness – "He took his tea at a little distance from the outcastes. . . "(89) – he also has a vision in which "All sorrow was annihilated, not only for Indians, but for foreigners, birds, caves, railways, and the stars; all became joy, all laughter; there had never been disease nor doubt, misunderstanding, cruelty, fear" (285). Even Mrs Moore becomes part of India: she is included in this naturalising, reconciling process. During Godbole's religious ecstasy, he remembered "an old woman he had met in Chandrapore days" (283) and "he impelled her by his spiritual force to that place where completeness can be found" (283), which would cause the "faintly clinging forms of trouble" (287) to disappear. Frances Singh says of this vision of inclusiveness, "By including the railways, which had been introduced by the English and were almost synonymous with them and their rule, in the context of birds, stars and caves, Godbole makes the English become a natural part of India, a part of her landscape. The Indianization and naturalising of the railways symbolically frees India from the English rule which had been imposed on it."<sup>52</sup>

The third section of the novel 'Temple', seemingly removed from politics contains the political message of inclusiveness. Frances Singh says: "what is born during the rites is not only Krishna, but India herself, in all her inclusive wholeness."<sup>53</sup> This suggests the connection between religion and politics, such as the idea of inventing a nation through religious myth. Singh believes that Forster was influenced by some of Gandhi's political/religious ideals. Trivedi on the other hand is mocking of Singh: "By 1922, when Gandhi called off the movement because it had in places grown violent, he was already very probably the most influential figure in the land. Yet he is entirely,

---

<sup>52</sup> Singh 270.

<sup>53</sup> Singh 270.



conspicuously, and so inexplicably absent from Forster's novel that at least one sympathetic critic has felt the need to invent him on Forster's behalf."<sup>54</sup>

Godbole has pride in the spirit of India because he sees it as being able to transcend national differences. The novel says: "In one poem – the only one funny old Godbole liked – he had skipped over the mother-land (whom he did not truly love) and gone straight to internationality. . . . Ah, India, who seems not to move, will go straight there while the other nations waste their time" (290). A similar preference is visible in Tagore's thinking as noted by Trivedi: "But there can be little doubt of his [Tagore's] general intent that he stands for a supersession and transcendence of nationalism by internationalism. . . ." <sup>55</sup> In fact he showed that internationalism is not necessarily an enemy of nationalism but can in fact enhance its definition. Trivedi comments: "Nehru had in a tribute in 1931 said that Tagore 'has given our nationalism the outlook of internationalism and has enriched it.' <sup>56</sup> It is through such compelling inclusive representation that Tagore, with all his unyielding anti-nationalism, is yet popularly (and ironically) seen as one of the trinity of India's great national—and nationalist—leaders of this century. . . ." <sup>57</sup>

Godbole's approach to the nation is similar to Forster's as expressed in his essays. Therefore, Godbole cannot simply be labelled as a mystic nor does his view simply reflect Forster's: an Indian, Tagore, has also felt this way. Forster says that the idea that his nation is better than anyone else's did not occur to him. In fact such an idea, as history has shown, proves to be a dangerous one. His vision of nationalism in general is that it should enrich humanity:

---

<sup>54</sup> Trivedi 175-176.

<sup>55</sup> Trivedi 73.

<sup>56</sup> Nehru, *The Golden Book of Tagore*, ed. Ramananda Chatterji (Calcutta: Golden Book Committee, 1931); quoted by Amiya Chakravarty (ed.), *A Tagore Reader* (1961; Boston: Beacon Books, 1967): 386. Quoted in Trivedi 77.

<sup>57</sup> Trivedi 77.

When a culture is genuinely national, it is capable, when the hour strikes, of becoming super-national, and contributing to the general good of humanity. It gives and takes. It wants to give and take. It has generosity and modesty, it is not confined by political and geographic boundaries, it does not fidget about purity of race or worry about survival, but, living in the present and sustained by the desire to create, it expands wherever human beings are to be found.<sup>58</sup>

For Forster, nationalism's exclusivity can be a poisonous thing. His preference is definitely for internationalism, not an insularity but an expanding of boundaries. He saw this was present in the national imagination of Goethe, a German writer: "But they [Nazis] rightly consider him their arch-enemy. For Goethe believed in toleration, he was the nationalist who is ripe for super-nationalism, he was the German who was wanting Germany's genius to enrich the whole world. His spirit will re-arise when this madness and cruelty have passed."<sup>59</sup>

### Conclusion

*A Passage to India* deals historically and imaginatively with British India where the modern educated Indian is becoming conscious of his oppression and his antagonism towards British dominance. It also includes a consciousness of a multiple India in which Indians are trying to come to terms with the differences that exist among themselves. This complex awareness of the novel questions the assumptions by critics that Forster's politics are simply a reflection of liberal/colonial views. His sense of the problematic future of India because of its multitude of divisions is prophetic as it remains a problem India faces in the present day. When he returned to India in 1945 he felt this strongly: "To the tragic problem of India's political future I can contribute no solution."<sup>60</sup> He believed that the solution would have to take into account the multitude

---

<sup>58</sup> "Three Anti-Nazi Broadcasts: Culture and Freedom" [first published 1940], *Two Cheers* 33.

<sup>59</sup> "Three Anti-Nazi Broadcasts: What Has Germany Done to the Germans?" [first published 1940], *Two Cheers* 37.

<sup>60</sup> "India Again," *Two Cheers* 322.

of differences that exist in India. He was suspicious of the nationalist movement to an extent because he believed it failed to be inclusive. The postcolonial project has to be careful not to reduce the colonial experience to the coloniser-colonised, a battle between colonialist and nationalist. The struggles of marginalised women, Moslems, classes, individuals and those with liberal humanist values and spirituality should be taken into account. In fact it does justice to India to talk about her in other ways. Said is critical of Forster's presumption "that *he* can get past the puerile nationalist put-ons to the essential India. . . ." <sup>61</sup> To the contrary, Forster's concept of an 'essential India', is an India which defines itself through a lack of definition because of its multifariousness.

---

<sup>61</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 247.

## Chapter Four

### India

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with *A Passage to India*'s resistance to and participation in an imaginative colonisation of India. The novel deconstructs its characters' inability to read India and even more significantly its own inability to represent her. It shows this by inventing an India that resists the simplistic definitions imposed on it by the arrogant clarity of the West. The novel subverts ideologies resulting in essentialist discourses about what India is and is not. Richard Cronin has described this effectively: "In the imperial Indian novel the novelist, like the novelist's central character, is a hero. The novel performs the heroic task: it gives order to the formless; it represents what before was unrepresented", whereas in "the writing of Forster and Ackerley an ironic mode displaces the heroic."<sup>1</sup> According to Arthur Lindley, Forster "surround[s] the subject [India] with versions of what it might be, but isn't". He does this through the use of parody which Lindley says is: "The natural mode for narrating the unnarratable. . . ."<sup>2</sup> However, as Robert Barratt states "his decision to resist totalizing certainty in favour of the ambiguity of absence. . . ."<sup>3</sup> is also seen as the novel's weakness.

This notion of 'the ambiguity of absence' is most visible in the novel's creation of the mysterious Marabar. The question of what did happen in the cave has taken root in the literary imagination. However, recent critics are much more inclined to see such a representation of India and the colonial experience as proof of Forster's orientalism.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cronin, *Imagining India* 159.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Lindley, "Raj as Romance/Raj as Parody: Lean's and Forster's *A Passage to India*," *Film/Literature Quartely* 2.1 (1992) : 64.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Barratt, "Marabar: The Caves of Deconstruction," *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 23.2 (1993) : 127.

Said defines this discourse in the following terms: “Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>4</sup> This definition suggests that in keeping the Marabar incomprehensible the novel is attempting to have authority over the Orient.

Cronin also suggests accompanying problems about an emphasis on an India that defies labels: “For Western writers the failure to imagine India, the realisation that India is unfathomable, can be presented as an imaginative triumph. Indian writers have no such easy recourse. An absence, even if it does imply a presence, is not a place one can comfortably live in.”<sup>5</sup> Whether the novel’s indeterminacy as regards India indicates that it is participating in an orientalist or a postmodern representation of India, it is challenging to Indian writers who are creating their own determinate narratives of India. In fact, their projects are often geared to representing the ‘essential India’. For example, a well known director of Indian films, Satyajit Ray, attempted to fill in this absence created by ‘colonial’ texts such as Forster’s through his films which depict India as essentially poor and rural. He is quoted in Andrew Robinson’s book, *The Inner Eye*, as saying, that “Forster overdid the mysteriousness of India”. The reason he gives for this is that “India’s seen from the English point of view.”<sup>6</sup> For Ray this limitation of Forster’s was the outcome for someone who “spoke no Indian language” and thus had no “access to large areas of the Indian mind.”<sup>7</sup>

Other Indian critics, particularly in recent evaluations of the novel, hold the opinion that Western writers often create a psychological and metaphysical drama of India which says nothing about India but a lot about the West. They believe that most western writers are unable to represent India. For example, Naik claims: “Anglo-Indian

---

<sup>4</sup> *Orientalism* 3.

<sup>5</sup> Cronin 194.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Robinson, *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1989) 286.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson 286.

fiction, by and large, remains, like Forster's *A Passage to India* itself, less than a passage to India."<sup>8</sup> Sara Suleri expresses a similar belief: "Where Forster transgresses even an Orientalist decorum is by implying that India is really not other at all, but merely a mode or passageway to endorse the infinite variety that constitutes a reading of the West."<sup>9</sup> Suleri however has given no credit to Forster for his self-deconstruction, that is, his awareness of this very solipsism of the West.

Forster partially belongs to a conventional realist tradition and therefore he is inclined to romanticise and sentimentalise India. His representation of the mysteriousness of India is mirrored in his interest in the mysteriousness of personal relations. His insistence on keeping the Marabar incident a mystery can be perceived as draining the plot of racial and sexual politics. At the same time, the novel is provocative in its use of a colonial narrative which creates the mysterious image of India. Furthermore, this sense that India overwhelms the mind and the invader, is not merely a colonial idea but continues to be a source of imaginative fervour even today. It is embodied in a central question asked by the novel: "How can the mind take hold of such a country?" (148). Cronin is conscious of the contemporary nature of Forster's question and uses it as an epigraph for *Imagining India*.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Naik 173.

<sup>9</sup> Sara Suleri, "The Geography of *A Passage to India*," *Literature In The Modern World*, ed. Dennis Walder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 246.

<sup>10</sup> Cronin Richard, *Imagining India* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989).

## Part One

By comparing David Lean's film adaptation of *A Passage to India* with the novel, it can be seen how remote Forster's novel is from Lean's orientalism/colonialism. Rustom Bharucha has made such a comparison: "It substitutes a touristic and sensational 'treatment' of the Orient for Forster's deep and elusive vision of India. Whereas the novel is oblique, 'dull', and unresolved, the film is obvious, climactic, and fully resolved."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Satyajit Ray has noted that the film is not Forster at all: "The whole thing is too picturesque and spick and span – the trains, bazaars, the costumes, the mosque, the club. . . . One longs for quiet moments."<sup>12</sup> Both critics suggest that Lean has imagined the very kind of India that the novel is so sceptical about.<sup>13</sup> The novel displays this scepticism in the irony that surrounds some of its characters' readings of India.

For example, the 'tourist gaze'<sup>14</sup> is reflected in Adela's approach to India. The novel is critical of her ability to see India only in superficial terms of the picturesque:

Colour would remain – the pageant of birds in the early morning, brown bodies, white turbans, idols whose flesh was scarlet or blue – and movement would remain as long as there were crowds in the bazaar and bathers in the tanks. Perched up on the seat of a dogcart, she would see them. But the force that lies behind colour and movement would escape her even more effectually than it did now. She would see India always as a frieze, never as a spirit. . . . (66)

---

<sup>11</sup> Rustom Bharucha, "The 'Boom' of David Lean's *A Passage to India*," *Before His Eyes*, ed. Bert Cardullo (Lanham: UP of America, 1986) 156.

<sup>12</sup> Robinson 287.

<sup>13</sup> David Lean's version of *A Passage to India* makes it understandable why Forster strongly resisted his novel being made into a film.

<sup>14</sup> The critic Graham Huggan, noting the Australian fictional resistance to European constructs of India, uses the term 'tourist gaze' in "Transformations of the Tourist Gaze: India in Recent Australian Fiction," *Westerly* 4 (Summer, 1993): 83.

The novel shows its scepticism of this way of reading India by beginning with a ‘mock-guidebook prose’<sup>15</sup> style which subverts traditional and romantic stereotypes of the mysterious and exotic East: “Except for the Marabar Caves . . . the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary . . . scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely . . . the Ganges happens not to be holy here. . . . The streets are mean, the temples ineffective. . .”(31).

The novel questions its characters’ perceptions of the essential or ‘real India’. Fielding is particularly conscious of a definition of India from which Indians are excluded, when he says subversively “Try seeing Indians”, to Adela’s claim “I want to see the real India” (46). Fielding is right in pointing this out, also, because it is a typical attitude of Anglo-Indian writers to romanticise ‘India’ while ignoring Indians whom they think are inferior. Pradhan notes: “whenever Kipling (or any character of his) refers endearingly to India, it is always to the land and never to its people.”<sup>16</sup> Adela is partly conscious of her limited reading of India, but her panic that the ‘real India’ will escape her if she succumbs to becoming an Anglo-Indian causes her to then see India only in terms of one Indian – Aziz: “She would see India always as a frieze, never as a spirit, and she *assumed* that it was a spirit of which Mrs Moore had had a glimpse”, emphasis added, (66). The novel’s use of the word ‘assumed’, suggests that the need to capture an alterity leads her to perceive India in a limited way. The novel rejects the orientalist belief that India can so easily be located in one type of Indian, and says “No one is India”. Adela, however, perpetuates this orientalist discourse: “In her ignorance, she regarded him [Aziz] as ‘India’, and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method inaccurate, and that no one is India” (88–89). Adela is not able to see that India’s spirituality goes beyond the surface.

---

<sup>15</sup> Lindley, 64.

<sup>16</sup> Pradhan, “Kipling’s India” 20.



India is represented as an alterity which the characters have difficulty in perceiving, but the novel is also sceptical of the idea of 'alterity' because it realises that in some ways India acts as a mirror to the characters' confusions and delusions about themselves. As Grant Amyot remarks: "East meets West, but the main result in the end is the reflection of the West in the mirror which the East holds up."<sup>17</sup> This mimesis can be seen in Adela's dual romanticisation of marriage and India: "It was Adela's faith that the whole stream of events is important and interesting. . . . She was particularly vexed now because she was both in India and engaged to be married, which double event should have made every instant sublime" (145–146).

The novel uses India to subvert this desire for conventionality, as in marriage for example which acts as an escape from self-knowledge. The truth is that she did not love Ronny and according to her western values this is generally a prerequisite for marriage. Similarly, the novel is ironic about Mrs Moore's traditional Christian notion that God is unequivocally 'love'. The novel is aware that India is seen in terms of the troubles of the western characters: Adela says "You mean that my bothers are mixed up with India?" (112). This desire of Adela and Mrs Moore to see the 'real India' is treated sceptically by the novel because it is so subjective: "her desire to see India had suddenly decreased. There had been a factitious element in it" (102). Similarly, Mrs Moore says "I don't want to see India now. . ." (109). It is only when Mrs Moore makes her passage back to England that she regains a sense of 'objectivity': "She watched the indestructible life of man and his changing faces, and the houses he had built for himself and God, and they appeared to her not in terms of her own trouble but as things to see" (213). The novel suggests that reading India is a subjective exercise, but there are different degrees of subjectivity. Forster deliberately constructs this idea that India is a mirror for western behaviour in order to show the solipsism of the West as well as to suggest that India's power is so overwhelming that it pricks at the armour of conventionality and insularity that the characters have constructed around themselves.

---

<sup>17</sup> Grant Amyot, "Tales of the Raj," *Queen's Quarterly* 92 (1985) : 891.

For example, India disturbs Adela's control of her 'normal' self. On receiving the news that Ronny had broken their engagement, she says to Fielding

‘I ought to have spoken myself, but I drifted on, wondering what would happen. I would willingly have gone on spoiling his life through inertia – one has nothing to do, one belongs nowhere and becomes a public nuisance without realizing it. . . . I speak only of India. I am not astray in England. I fit in there – no, don't think I shall do harm in England.’ (260)

Even the myopic Ronny perceives that India has acted as a catalyst in regard to his mother and what she has been suppressing about herself: “India had brought her into the open” (206).

Frederick Crews comments: “if I were to assign a single theme to *A Passage to India*, I would call it the incongruity between aspiration and reality.”<sup>18</sup> However, the novel resists this universal significance to an extent by pointing out that the disappointment of this incongruity is a result of the solipsism of the West. For example, Adela excitedly says: “Look, the sun's rising – this'll be absolutely magnificent – come quickly – look. I wouldn't have missed this for anything. We should never have seen it if we'd stuck to the Turtons and their eternal elephants. . . . He was presently observed trailing yellowish behind the trees. . . .” (149-150). ‘Indian reality’ is resistant to expectation and order in the western sense; on the contrary India is disordered and inclusive in its lack of definition. When the four outsiders fall into the Mau and their boats capsize, all objects ridiculous and august mix together: “The oars, the sacred tray, the letters of Ronny and Adela, broke loose and floated confusedly” (310). The narrator reluctantly says “That was the climax, as far as India admits of one” (310)<sup>19</sup> Through perceiving India as a climax the characters get a sense of order and romance but India defies this as well. Subversively, India shows this order to be an illusion. For example,

---

<sup>18</sup> Frederick Crews, *E. M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism* (London: Oxford UP, 1962) 142.

<sup>19</sup> The novel connects a sense of anti-climax with India's spirit in *The Hill of Devi* (London: Penguin, 1965) as well: “We swept into the courtyard, then melted into nothing, as is the Indian spirit. There was no grand crisis or reception” (77).

on the Marabar expedition, the English visitors expect India to deliver a magnificent sunset, but it fails. The narrator intervenes, asking a question provocatively from a Eurocentric point of view: "Why, when the chamber was prepared, did the bridegroom not enter with trumpets and shawms, as *humanity* expects?" (150; emphasis added). The novel pointedly suggests that the 'European' desire for order confronts India's reality of disorder: "*Men* yearn for poetry though they may not confess it; they desire that joy be graceful, and sorrow august, and infinity have a form, and India fails to accommodate them. The annual helter-skelter of April, when irritability and lust spread like a canker, is one of her comments on the orderly hopes of *humanity*." (215; emphasis added).

The term 'humanity' in the quote above is used in an ironic way and the novel proves this by displaying a different kind of humanity that does not have 'orderly hopes'. For example, in the Marabar an object is seen from two perspectives. The first perspective seeks order of a rational kind and the other sees order existing in a different approach to life, such as the mythical one. Adela first says it is a snake, then with the help of Ronny's field glasses she realises that it was a twisted stump of a toddy-palm. But the villagers continue to believe that it is a snake. They have invented their own forms of order, in terms of myth although myth is seemingly irrational on the surface. The following narrative comment suggests that in the Marabar there is only muddle and illusion as seen from a western perspective: "Nothing was explained, and yet there was no romance" (153). Furthermore, the narrator says that although in the towns of Calcutta and Lahore, "interesting events occur and personalities develop" (148), in the Marabar "Life went on as usual, but had no consequences, that is to say, sounds did not echo or thoughts develop. Everything seemed cut off at its root, and therefore infected with illusion" (152). Forster is also in danger of reinforcing the stereotype of the rational West and the irrational East. This tendency of his is far more explicit in his book *The Hill of Devi*.

Jan Mohamed says that Forster's "narrative decision to turn India into a metaphysical protagonist *inherently* antithetical to Western liberal humanism probably stems from a sense of larger cultural differences, the machinery of which is similar to that of the manichean allegory"<sup>20</sup> (emphasis added). Forster, however, maintains a degree of irony, which implies that this antithesis is a Western construct and not the truth. The passage in the novel which describes Fielding's return to the Mediterranean is offered provocatively as the authorial consciousness resists the narrator's and the main character's assumptions. The narrator describes India in terms of a Manichean opposition: "When men leave that exquisite lake, whether through the Bosphorus or the Pillars of Hercules, they approach the monstrous and extraordinary; and the southern exit leads to the strangest experience of all" (278). But the author is aware of the limitations of the narrator in terms of his desire to control. Gerald Doherty comments: "If for the narrator, India configures 'the monstrous and extraordinary' it is because it disrupts those classic narrative configurations, based on sequence and synthesis, through which he is trying to circumscribe and contain it."<sup>21</sup> Only in the Mediterranean can Fielding experience "the harmony between the works of man and the earth that upholds them, the civilization that has escaped muddle, the spirit in a reasonable form, with flesh and blood subsisting" (278). The novel does show this opposition existing in Fielding's mind: "Writing picture-postcards to his Indian friends, he felt that all of them would miss the joys he experienced now, the joys of form, and that this constituted a serious barrier" (278). This perspective is limited however because the narrator reminds us that Fielding "had forgotten the beauty of form among idol temples and lumpy hills; indeed, without form, how can there be beauty" (278). When the narrator declares that "The Mediterranean is the human norm" (278), he is aware that this concept of being 'human' and of 'normality' comes from a limited perception of the desire or even obsession for order and control. This postcolonial and postmodern awareness of

---

<sup>20</sup> Abdul JanMohammed. "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 77.

<sup>21</sup> Gerald Doherty. "White Circles/Black Holes: Worlds of Difference in *A Passage to India*," *Orbis Litterarum* 46 (1991):116.

Eurocentrism by Forster also reflects Said's comment: "when most European thinkers celebrated humanity or culture they were principally celebrating ideas and values they ascribed to their own national culture, or to Europe as distinct from the Orient, Africa and even the Americas."<sup>22</sup>

Often characters see India as being an antithesis to Europe, but this stereotype is not necessarily the novel's own. For example, Fielding thinks:

It was *as if* irritation exuded from the very soil. Could one have been so petty on a Scotch moor or an Italian alp? Fielding wondered afterwards. There *seemed* no reserve of tranquillity to draw upon in India. Either none, or else tranquillity swallowed up everything, as it *appeared* to do for Professor Godbole. (94–95; emphasis added)

These words that deliberately 'hesitate' suggest that in Fielding's need to define this otherness which he is encountering he simplifies the reality by seeing it from a Eurocentric point of view. Mrs Moore, feeling a sense of discomfort with the alien Marabar, suggests a similar antithesis between England and India: "'Ah, Dearest Grasmere!' Its little lakes and mountains were beloved by them all. Romantic yet manageable, it sprang from a kindlier planet. Here an untidy plain stretched to the knees of the Marabar" (150). Yet these are not simply the characters' limited readings but partly reflect the author's. He exhibits this tendency to create antitheses in his other writings about India. For example, he comments, in a short piece, 'Adrift In India' (1922) that "there is scarcely anything in that tormented land which fills up the gulf between the illimitable and the inane and the society suffers in consequence."<sup>23</sup> This way of seeing India as a land of extremes is very similar to the passage quoted from the novel about Fielding's reading of India, except, significantly, Fielding's reading is treated with more scepticism.

---

<sup>22</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 51.

<sup>23</sup> "Adrift in India: Pan" [first published 1922], *Abinger Harvest* 309.

Fielding tries to exercise a sense of control and order by closing the definition of India: "A mystery is only a high-sounding term for a muddle. . . . Aziz and I know well that India's a muddle" (86). The novel has suggested in many places that India is a mystery and because Fielding cannot perceive this, he is unable to connect with it. Fielding's perception of India as a muddle is influenced by an imperialistic discourse of power. How orientalism operates as a 'will to power' is particularly visible when Ronny says "Most of the people you see are seditious at heart, and the rest'd run squealing. The cultivator – he's another story. The Pathan – he's a man if you like. But these people – don't imagine they're India" (59). It is quite obvious that the British Empire is threatened by any elements in society that are politically conscious. Ronny asserts that the 'cultivator' and the 'Pathan' are 'real India' because they are not politically threatening. Subsequently, Forster is sceptical of the idea that the 'real India' is located only in the 'toiling ryot' because its reality is subjective, as it is isolated from the rest of India: "Hindus, Hindus only, mild-featured men, mostly villagers, for whom anything outside their villages passed in a dream. They were the toiling ryot, whom some call the real India" (281).

## Part Two

Although the novel is ironic in its approach to claims of 'truth', 'reality' and 'knowledge' by some of the characters, it is not equally sceptical of all the definitions of India and in this sense it resists a full postmodern openness. The characters who come closest to understanding India – Godbole and Mrs Moore are the ones who ironically sense how far they really are from understanding her. They experience India in terms of her elusivity and ambiguity, which is how Forster generally perceives her.

Forster sees India in ambiguous terms and this is suggested through his demystifying of her, such as when he says in his characteristic wry tone: "The East is mysterious . . . to boring point."<sup>24</sup> and at the same time his romanticising of India. This is shown in the novel by his invention of the Marabar Caves which are the central symbol of mystery in the novel. They are mysterious because Forster has made them ambiguous. Those who sense a power and mystery about the caves perceive them to be 'extraordinary' and those who do not, see them as ordinary.

Only from a tourist's perspective, as seen by Adela from the upper verandah of the club and "in certain lights and at suitable distances. . ." (139), and seen from the train as the group leave the caves, do they seem romantic and containable: "Marabars seen from a distance" seem "finite and rather romantic" (171)<sup>25</sup> The novel is suggesting that the characters' romanticising of the Marabar is a result of their ignorance. This is displayed in Aziz's reaction to the Marabars: "Occupied by his own munificence, Aziz noticed nothing. His guests noticed a little. . . . His ignorance became evident. . . . In spite of his gay, confident talk, he had no notion how to treat this particular aspect of India; he was lost in it without Professor Godbole, like themselves" (153). Aziz, unable to pin Godbole down about what was so extraordinary about the Marabar, says: "We all

---

<sup>24</sup> "Adrift in India: Pan," *Abinger Harvest* 310.

<sup>25</sup> *The Hill of Devi* contains the conscious irony that India is romanticised only through certain constructs. For example, "The royal tombs were also mysterious if seen from a boat on the Tank and in the evening light and unexpectedly" (47).

talk of the famous Marabar Caves. Perhaps that is our empty brag". Godbole replies mysteriously "No, I should not quite say that" (92). He is used by the novel to reinforce the idea of deconstruction within the text. At the same time, the suggestion that Godbole possesses knowledge of the Marabars but keeps mysteriously silent about it is a kind of romanticism as well. The novel is even comical about it: "Godbole, who had never been known to tell anyone anything. . ." (300). The narrator says "nobody could romanticise the Marabar". This statement suggests a romanticism in itself or the novel is conveying a significant political message which is, on the contrary, very anti-romantic. One of the main ways in which the colonialists dominated India was through an alleged knowledge of her. The Marabars undermine all attempts to know her. The novel makes it clear what Aziz knows and what he does not: "For at last he was talking about what he knew and felt . . . he was again the oriental guide whom they appreciated" (156). They are grateful for Aziz taking control again because the absence of knowledge makes the characters uncomfortable. The mysterious Marabars are symbolic of this lack of knowledge and control which the characters experience in India. As Barratt comments: "In an uncanny anticipation of the deconstructive approach, the Marabar Caves seem to function as a topographical model of deconstruction within the text."<sup>26</sup>

The novel implies that the very act of colonising or invading the Marabars by the British colonisers and Aziz (the novel has suggested a Moslem ignorance of and aggression towards aspects of India which they do not understand – Hindus and Hinduism) precludes them from knowing the Marabars, particularly in their own terms of reference and understanding. This act of colonisation leads to a greater absence of meaning, or in other words to banishment of a kind: "How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile" (148). Barratt confirms this argument: "all those seeking to know are left further than ever

---

<sup>26</sup> Barratt 127.



from discovering what, if anything, was extraordinary about the Marabar Caves.”<sup>27</sup> The invader in turn is exiled from knowing or understanding the culture and history of India and Indians when he creates a state of internal exile for them.

If Godbole is supposed to possess some knowledge that the others do not have, it is in his acceptance of the limitations of his own knowledge. The novel attributes a ‘political’ significance to the religious Hindu rites in the Gokhul Ashtami festival of which Godbole is a major participant. Its message is that India can only be ‘understood’ through deferment: “emblems of passage; a passage not easy, not now, not here, not to be apprehended except when it is unattainable: The God to be thrown was an emblem of that” (309). Godbole’s silence suggests his acceptance that India cannot be contained within language: “Like the reluctant immanence of Being that neglects to come in response to Godbole’s imprecations, the essence of Marabar’s caves will not reveal itself in language.”<sup>28</sup> The novel generally suggests that India cannot be contained in language. Gerald Doherty has noted this about the novel: “The description of the caves persistently hovers on the borders of what can be written, at the boundless-boundary where language writes itself out. It highlights a radical tension between the otherness of the caves and the verbal sign system which, in attributing qualities to them, only serves to domesticate them (even a designation like “the formless, primordial abyss before time and space” (Parry 40) imposes a containment within categories of knowledge that the description seems designed to resist).”<sup>29</sup> Forster suggests that even if Godbole had made contact with the unknown, there is still no way of putting that experience in language. Therefore meaning and truth are always deferred:

But the human spirit had tried by a desperate contortion to ravish the unknown, flinging down science and history in the struggle, yes, beauty herself. Did it succeed? Books afterwards

---

<sup>27</sup> Barratt 129.

<sup>28</sup> Barratt 129.

<sup>29</sup> Doherty 111.

say 'Yes'. But how, if there is such an event, can it be remembered afterwards? how can it be expressed in anything but itself? Not only from the unbeliever are mysteries hid, but the adept himself cannot retain them (285).

The Marabar Caves cannot be explained in terms of 'good' and 'evil'. The narrator warns that "if mankind grew curious and excavated, nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good or evil" (139). Barratt similarly suggests the novel's ability to go beyond common binaries: "in addressing such monolithic cultural certainties of the British Raj as race, gender, and religion, Forster also focuses upon the imperfections of a language that has the constitutive power to construct systems and codes of certainty that inevitably seem to structure themselves as binary opposites."<sup>30</sup> 'Nothing' according to Gillian Beer is the novel's most constructive force because it resists the tendency to interpret the Marabar Caves in a binary opposition constructed by another culture. Doherty reinforces this idea: "In Gillian Beer's essay, negation is perceived as more energizing than affirmation: 'nothing' is rescued from its habitual contamination with metaphysical nihilism to become the most constructive force in the text."<sup>31</sup> In a sense, 'nothing' is the answer Godbole gives to Aziz when he remains silent in response to his questions about the Marabar. It has been a common practice for critics to label the Marabar experience as conveying a nihilistic message, suggesting that the 'soul of India' is empty and evil. This view reveals an orientalism on their part.

On the contrary, the novel subverts an essentialist and exoticist discourse based on a fetishising of the other which tries to brand the Marabar as evil. Maria Couto claims however that the novel is unwittingly guilty of contributing to that very discourse:

Admittedly Forster fixes on the caves to communicate his own perceptions of the universe, but in doing so invests Indian reality with destructive power. Thus when the breakdown takes place, the fault seems to lie with India . . . despite the deeper contexts

---

<sup>30</sup> Barratt 127.

<sup>31</sup> Doherty 106-107.

of the narrative, its thrust suggests that the two Englishwomen were disoriented by India, by its primitive power, its mystery – the clichés of all literary manifestations of the Raj. Small wonder that Edward Said includes Forster in “the official intellectual genealogy of Orientalism.”<sup>32</sup>

It would have been more productive if Couto had given greater importance to what she terms ‘the deeper contexts of the narrative’, as Gerald Doherty seems to do: “Beneath the lucid transparencies of the descriptive text, disturbing sub-texts are visible. . . .”<sup>33</sup> Even Salman Rushdie, who is zealous in his criticism of texts which create a false image of India, feels that “Forster’s scene in the Marabar Caves retains its ambiguity and mystery. . . .”<sup>34</sup>

Ronny tries to undermine the heterogeneity and complexity of India’s spirit by saying in a mocking tone: “There’s your Ganges” (52). Mrs Moore’s response, however, suggests a sense of India’s fullness and ambivalence: “What a terrible river! What a wonderful river!” (53). She is part of that ‘feminine imagination’ which Ronald Inden attributes to India. The Indian world-view is a sense of India as a mother figure – amorphous, inclusive: “The essence of the mind (of India) was its ‘feminine’ imagination, source of the dream-like world-view of the Indians. She was an inferior substitute for the West’s masculine, world-ordering rationality.”<sup>35</sup> The novel subverts this negative orientalist stereotype by privileging this feminine imagination in Mrs Moore.

On a subterranean level Mrs Moore is confronted by India’s mystery. It is not a mystery based on exoticist principles as in David Lean’s representation of India’s mysteriousness; as Arthur Lindley argues: “a sequence in the novel which emphasizes

---

<sup>32</sup> Maria Couto, “Clinging to the Wreckage: Raj Fictions,” *Encounter*. 63 Summer (1984) : 39.

<sup>33</sup> Doherty 111.

<sup>34</sup> Rushdie 89.

<sup>35</sup> Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) 4.

the alienness and indefinability of India through the mystery of what hits the car has been replaced by one which equates India with a complex of Nature, antiquity, eros, and monkeys.”<sup>36</sup> The novel suggests that India can be ‘explained’ neither through orientalist myth nor western logic. Adela does not connect with India because she only approaches her with rationality and clarity: “Its message – for it had one - avoided her well-equipped mind” (148). Mrs Moore experiences Indian reality in a different way. For example, Adela and Ronny have an accident in the Nawab Badhur’s car; although they do not see what is responsible for the accident they conclude from the skid marks that they must have hit an animal. The narrative itself admits that it encounters a force which it cannot explain in rational terms: “Steady and smooth ran the marks of the car, ribbons neatly nicked with lozenges; then all went mad” (104).<sup>37</sup> Later on in the novel we are told that the Nawab Badhur had in the past accidentally run over a man whose ghost was now waiting on the road for him: “None of the English people knew of this, nor did the chauffeur; it was a racial secret communicable more by blood than speech” (113). When Adela then tells Mrs Moore of the car accident: “Mrs Moore shivered, ‘A ghost!’ But the idea of a ghost scarcely passed her lips” (111). This implies that she is connected with India in an unconscious way, a way which surpasses racial barriers.

Furthermore, her unconscious sympathy with India is sensed by the Indian crowd in the courtroom and, more importantly, on the streets: “The tumult increased, the invocation of Mrs Moore continued, and people who did not know what the syllables meant repeated them like a charm. They became Indianized into Esmis Esmoor, they were taken up in the street outside” (227). However, the novel’s use of the words ‘charm’ and ‘magic’(227) to describe this invocation suggests a sense not only of a different force and reality, but also an Indian romanticisation of Mrs Moore. This implies a unity of experience between the ‘East’ and ‘West’ binaries. Both are capable

---

<sup>36</sup> Lindley 62.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Mad’ and ‘madness’ are not uncommon associations with India and Forster has made them himself in this novel. They refer to what is evil or incomprehensible in India.

of reading experience in a subjective way and creating illusions about the other. The embracing of Mrs Moore by the Indians and vice versa suggests that neither is completely alien to the other. Mrs Moore is used to suggest that India can reveal the unity that exists between different cultures and races. For example, she takes off her shoes before she enters the mosque, because for her God is one and when she blesses the wasp because she unconsciously feels that an unspoken unity exists between people and insects. India is not so 'alien' after all. On the contrary: "In England the moon had seemed dead and alien; here she was caught in the shawl of night together with earth and all the other stars. A sudden sense of unity. . ." (50-51).

The evocation of Mrs Moore's name in the court (a symbol of order) creates disorder. She is in a way a symbol for the novel's notion of India as disorder. Mrs Moore accepts the presence of the wasp on her clothes peg, although it suggests that an imposed order has been disturbed: "Perhaps he mistook the peg for a branch – no Indian animal has any sense of an interior. Bats, rats, birds, insects will as soon nest inside a house as out; it is to them a normal growth of the eternal jungle, which alternately produces houses trees, houses trees" (55). Here the novel suggests a natural disorder or muddle which is inclusive. In contrast the other characters are obsessed with order and identity which lead to exclusion. For example, the Christians, Graysford and Sorley, would become uneasy whenever the discussion of who God will and won't accept in heaven descended to include wasps (58). Similarly, Aziz's desire to exclude is symbolised by his persistence in killing the flies in his house. Godbole on the other hand incorporates the wasp into his vision of wholeness. Adela's desire to name the bird suggests that, unlike Mrs Moore and Godbole, she is not able merely to accept its reality. Her conscious desire 'to see', 'to know' and 'to understand' is expressed in her plea: "Then tell me everything you will, or I shall never understand India" (91)) is confronted with India's mystery: "But nothing in India is identifiable, the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge in something else" (101). India is unknowable to her but not inherently so as 'disappear' suggests presence not non-existence(186), as does, 'merge into something else'.

Even though Mrs Moore shows her sympathy with India, such as in her harmonious act of blessing the wasp, this is immediately juxtaposed with a sense of India's uneasiness. The novel suggests that there still remains everything excluded from her vision that she has not blessed: "There he clung, asleep, while jackels in the plain bayed their desires and mingled with the percussion of drums. 'Pretty dear,' said Mrs Moore to the wasp. He did not wake, but her voice floated out, *to swell the night's uneasiness*" (55; emphasis added). This sense of peace that Mrs Moore feels as a result of her act is similar to the happiness that Aziz feels about the mosque; for him "the mosque – that alone signified". But this is only achieved through rejecting "the complex appeal of the night. . . ." (41). The Moslem viewpoint is monolithic but the novel does not allow the Moslem characters to be unaware of the flawed harmony that they speak of (38). Even India's nature rejects the traditional idea of the absolute: "And the night that encircled them, absolute as it seemed, was itself only a spurious unity, being modified by the gleams of day that leaked up round the edges of the earth, and by the stars" (103). This suggests that definitions of India can only be spurious themselves.

For all Mrs Moore's capacity to appreciate India as an individual, India proves to be too overwhelming for her to deal with. But she continues to possess intuitively a deeper sense of India's ambiguity which goes beyond even duality. She is able to feel the discomfort of her intuition in the cave. The deconstructive "echo . . . undoes those elegant symmetries – good/evil, light/dark, beautiful/ugly – that have constituted her knowledge of self. . . ." <sup>38</sup> This is suggested by the fact that she is so affected by the Marabar's echo: "The echo in the Marabar caves is a representation of the unrepresentable, a signifier that cannot be attached to any signified. Mrs Moore is the character most sensitive to the opacity of that sound, and it is offered as a guarantee of her sensitivity to the East." <sup>39</sup> The echo mocks Mrs Moore's limited perceptions and she is disillusioned with her inability to read India. But after the Marabar cave experience,

---

<sup>38</sup> Doherty 113-114.

<sup>39</sup> Cronin 159.

India mocks Mrs Moore even further: "So you thought an echo was India; you took the Marabar Caves as final?"(214). The novel asks how significant was her experience? Doherty suggests the ambivalence of her vision: "we come to a manifestation of difference at once 'petty' and 'profound'."<sup>40</sup> The novel suggests the ambiguity of 'India' and not the stereotype of the mysterious East. It teases her by implying that the message of the Marabar is only one aspect of India. The definition of India is rendered ambiguous because the novel offers in the Hindu festival another meaning of India which is totally different from the one revealed by the Marabar cave, but this new definition is also made ambiguous by the novel's scepticism of it: "God si Love. Is this the final message of India?" (283). The slip of the draughtsman implies that India cannot be contained by simple monolithic western formulations, such as 'God is love'. The novel's scepticism of this containment intentionally renders India both elusive and meaningful in its complexity.

---

<sup>40</sup> Doherty 119.

### Part Three

Although Forster in *A Passage to India* mocks his characters and the narrator's romanticising of India, he is guilty of this himself. He is sceptical of a colonial/oriental discourse which suggests that the West is superior to the East. In fact he privileges the East over the West but this still, partly, contributes to an orientalist discourse. Forster said that he wanted the East and West to meet but he also wanted the East to remain itself because he was afraid that the West would try to dominate her. Therefore it would have to remain mysterious, in order to resist this domination and that for him meant that a failure to understand India was a positive thing. On the other hand, Forster had his own reasons for seeing India the way he did. He prefers the romanticism of "an unknown world and at meeting an unknown character."<sup>41</sup> After all he did say that he "was all for Orientalism"<sup>42</sup> and he wanted "to get rid of sentimentality yet retain romance."<sup>43</sup> Cronin sees that Forster is capable of essentialising India's identity even if he does so in a positive way: "The better to liberate the heart, India assaults the intellect. Perfectly ordinary mistakes become symptomatic of the fallibility of the understanding."<sup>44</sup> In a sense Cronin has a point, for it seems that India's inaccessibility to the novel is sometimes more a result of practical things like language barriers and lack of proper information than any 'real' mystery although Forster continues to suggest India's mysteriousness: "Little is clear cut in India, and having emphasized that the family was Maratha I must now state that it was Rajput."<sup>45</sup> Similarly Forster writes in *The Hill of Devi*: "Everything that happens is said to be one thing and proves

---

<sup>41</sup> Forster, *The Hill of Devi* (London: Penguin, 1965) 9.

<sup>42</sup> This quote is over-simplified because Forster was himself a critic of Orientalism. He displayed this in his essays on the East in *Abinger Harvest*. See Mohammed Shaheen's article, "Forster's Salute To Egypt," *Twentieth Century Literature* 39.1 (Spring 1993): 32-46.

<sup>43</sup> Hejazi, Safaa, and Martin H. Quinn, "E.M. Forster and The Egyptian Mail: Wartime Journalism," *English Literature in Transition* 25.3 (1982) 139.

<sup>44</sup> Cronin 166.

<sup>45</sup> Forster, *The Hill of Devi* 35.



to be another, and as it is further said in an unknown tongue I live in a haze”<sup>46</sup> The novel openly admits that its description of Godbole’s song is seen from the English point of view and is a result of the language barrier: “This thin voice rose, and gave out one sound after another. At times there seemed rhythm, at times there was the illusion of a Western melody” (95). Cronin implies that it is Forster’s desire for mystery and vagueness not India itself which renders her inaccessible.

“In introducing the British Raj, Forster begins by revealing the silencing power of ‘narrative imperialism’ as the members of the Chandrapore Club define themselves with that arrogant certainty which inevitably reduces anything outside of its vision of itself.”<sup>47</sup> The novel goes one step further than Barratt realises by being aware of its own narrative imperialism when it deliberately emphasises the solipsism of its main characters as concerns anything outside their vision: “Presently the players went to bed, but not before other people had woken up elsewhere, people whose emotions they could not share, and whose existence they ignored” (114). The only thing that distinguishes the author’s consciousness from a solipsistic imperial imagination is irony. The narrative is unable to go beyond the experiences of its main characters due to a cultural, language and class limitation on the part of the author. The novel partly realises that its inaccessibility to India is due to class barriers: “people who wore nothing but a loincloth, people who wore not even that, and spent their lives in knocking two sticks together before a scarlet doll – humanity grading and drifting *beyond the educated vision, until no earthly invitation can embrace it*” (58; emphasis added). This is exactly what Ray has done in his films: he has captured the endless proliferation of India. Cronin noting this communalism as displayed in the Gokhul Ashtami festival, argues that this is where Forster’s text falls short: “What is achieved at the ceremony is a new kind of meaning, a meaning that is the more complete the more completely it is

---

<sup>46</sup> Forster, *The Hill of Devi* 59-60.

<sup>47</sup> Barratt 128.

deferred. . . . It is a kind of meaning that requires a new kind of novelist.”<sup>48</sup> An example of a new kind of novelist is Mulk Raj Anand who has been able to represent those Indians outside the alleged ‘educated vision’ in *The Coolie* and *The Untouchable*. Forster showed his support for this project by writing the introduction to the second novel.

Yet, despite Forster’s awareness of his own limitations, he has created an image of India, using minor Indian figures, such as, the punkahwallah and the nude chestnut gatherer, who are romantic and mysterious as a result of their alleged inaccessibility. He ends up representing them although in a limited way. As their reality is only hinted at, they appear unreal and dreamlike. One is forced to ask, as Francesca Kazan has, if these figures represent a “full silence or that of a void,”<sup>49</sup> and the answer is that the novel is ambiguous. For Forster was also conscious of the danger of representing the ‘other’ in terms of a void and he criticised those orientalist texts which have represented, for example, the Indian Harem “less as a mystery than an emptiness.”<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the novel subverts its main narrative by showing that whereas the main characters are constantly frustrated by India, there is no sense of disturbance on the fringes. For example, the ‘incomprehensible’ song that Godbole sings at Fielding’s tea party disturbs the English visitors, but it is heard by the nude man in the tank gathering chestnuts with delight and it fills him with a sense of peace. India is not seen in terms of a hostile alterity for these isolated figures in the text. The hints of Indian reality that we derive from these figures suggest a contrast between their objective and metaphysical realities. This suggests the difference between the English and Indian point of view.

Forster has mocked his characters and narrator for seeking order in India but in a sense he desires this order himself. Although much of the novel insists on the

---

<sup>48</sup> Cronin 191.

<sup>49</sup> Francesca Kazan. “Confabulations in *A Passage to India*,” *Criticism* 29.2 (1987): 203.

<sup>50</sup> “Salute to the Orient!” *Abinger Harvest* 254.

multifariousness of India, it also hopes for an underlying unity, a mystical heart, beyond local interpretations and contingency. In other words, the novel is self-deconstructing but it contains a nostalgic vision of unity. The descriptive passage of the Marabar Caves suggests a primal-aboriginal reality which also implies the underlying unity of India. Therefore, Forster momentarily creates in the religious festival, despite all kinds of difference, a sense of unity which is felt by the English, the Moslem, the Hindus and down to the lowest castes. Doherty believes that in the novel: "the possibility of thinking wholeness or unity" is visible in its construction of 'the over-arching sky'.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, perhaps the reverse is also 'the truth'. India's disordered surface and multiplicity may be an illusion, while an underlying order and unity exist. The possibility that a oneness exists does not necessarily reject India's complexity. The postmodernist Paul Armstrong fails to see that this hope of the novel is juxtaposed with its emphasis on India's multifariousness. India's unity is ironically implied in phrases like "Nothing embraces the whole of India. . ." (56).

At the same time, there is a different explanation of Forster's representation of India being unrepresentable in some ways, than his romanticisation of India. For the narrative "confronts a force that exceeds its own representation. . . ."<sup>52</sup> For example, "Beyond the sky must not there be something that overarches all the skies, more impartial even than they? Beyond which again. . ." (60). Similarly the silence suggests that language is inadequate: "Outside the arch there seemed always an arch, beyond the remotest echo a silence" (71). The novel shows how beyond a certain point India is inaccessible to the outsider (Westerner or townsman): "India has few important towns. India is the country, fields, fields, then hills, jungle, hills, and more fields. The branch-line stops, the road is only practicable for cars to a point, the bullock-carts lumber down the side-tracks, paths fray out into the cultivation, and disappear near a splash of red paint" (148). Forster, rather than being vague about what happened in the caves, was

---

<sup>51</sup> Doherty 109.

<sup>52</sup> Doherty 110.

suggesting something unique about India: “It’s a particular trick I felt justified in trying because my theme was India. It sprang straight from my subject matter. I wouldn’t have attempted it in other countries, which though they contain mysteries or muddles, manage to draw rings round them.”<sup>53</sup>

In many respects Forster represents India in terms of illusion, not necessarily because he is trying to perpetuate a discourse which suggests that India cannot be represented, but because he does not want to suggest that he has control or dominance over her reality. Forster was aware of his own novel’s inadequacies but he also believed that ‘the truth’ of India remained out of the grasp of fiction. The critic Arthur Lindley claims that it was: “a larger frustration with the pretensions of the novel to tell the truth” that contributed to Forster ceasing to write fiction.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, Forster did not believe that the creator should descend to the level of the showman and pretend that it is possible to dispense with the ‘illusion of life’; in the same way he realised that one could not dispense with the illusion which exists in one’s creation of India. Therefore, he does not aim in *A Passage to India* to represent ‘the truth’ about ‘India’.

### Conclusion

*A Passage to India* addresses the certainties of a language which results in a western narrative imperialism of India because Forster knows that he is dealing with uncertainties, when the subject is India. Said was intrigued by this aspect of Forster’s novel: “I have always felt that the most interesting thing about *A Passage to India*, is Forster’s using of India to represent material that according to the canons of the novel form cannot in fact be represented – vastness, incomprehensible creeds, secret motions, histories, and social forms.”<sup>55</sup> Rather than a monolithic representation of India, Forster’s portrayal is ambiguous. He presents an India which overwhelms the mind in

---

<sup>53</sup> Furbank 125.

<sup>54</sup> Lindley 66.

<sup>55</sup> *Culture and Imperialism* 241.

conjunction with a containment of it. Robert Barratt claims that it is “a novel the very heart of which remains so persistently indeterminate.”<sup>56</sup> However, the novel is not completely indeterminate because Forster is inevitably a participant in a determinate culture and language. The novel is indeterminate in the sense that it does not round off at the end but opens out. Questions in the novel remain unanswered and unresolved because the novel concedes that its characters do not have adequate resources to know India and life: “Perhaps life is a mystery, not a muddle; they could not tell. Perhaps the hundred Indias which fuss and squabble so tiresomely are one, and the universe they mirror is one. They had not the apparatus for judging” (261). The novel suggests that one could arrive at the position of ‘judging’ India only from a great distance, it “acquired . . . a definite outline . . . could it be viewed from the moon” (114).

The critic Lindley comments: “Forster knows that India stands for reality *because* it’s what cannot be narrated.”<sup>57</sup> Is Lindley however speaking only for outsiders? Does not the novel also imply that this reality which was not narratable is left to be narrated by others such as Indians and postcolonialists through a language which is more inclusive. This is partly what the novel is trying to suggest. The problem of representing ‘the other’ lies in a restrictive language due to cultural constructs. Barratt praises the novel’s ability to deconstruct in this respect: “Forster’s modernist text reveal[s] a startling postmodern awareness of the imperfections inherent within a language that divides the world into the kinds of fundamental opposition he portrays in *A Passage to India*.”<sup>58</sup> There is a distinction between ‘western’ (orientalist) language as opposed to human language which can be so much more inclusive of different experiences: “And instead of a well defined structure of determinate signifiers and signifieds, human

---

<sup>56</sup> Barratt 127.

<sup>57</sup> Lindley 66.

<sup>58</sup> Barratt 134.

language is much more like the sprawling, limitless interactive muddle or mystery that India is itself”<sup>59</sup>

As Rushdie and Cronin suggest about their own narratives of India, Forster seems to also realise the narrative limitations of imagining India. Rushdie comments: “‘my’ India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions.”<sup>60</sup> Cronin writes: “I was forced to realise that there were not a dozen Indias in my book, there was only one.”<sup>61</sup> Aziz in *A Passage to India* is seduced by some of the more sympathetic English in India but is disappointed in the end: “This pose of ‘seeing India’ which had seduced him to Miss Quested at Chandrapore was only a form of ruling India; no sympathy lay behind it” (301). On the contrary the emphasis of this chapter lies in the reverse: it focuses on an India which has seduced invaders and writers to become involved with her, although she continues to elude their grasps: “She calls ‘Come’ through her hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august. But come to what? She has never defined. She is not a promise, only an appeal” (149).

*A Passage to India* interrogates false representations and closed definitions of India but does not contain a complete postmodern openness. For the novel does attribute truth and meaning to India. But because the truth and meaning of India are multifarious, the novel finds it difficult to represent her. In fact the paradox or the ambiguity in the novel results because Forster in his attempt to subvert reductive labels of India, constructs an alterity that is conveyed through the same alleged orientalist language. This suggests that, for example, the novel’s creation of an image of India as ‘mysterious’ should not automatically be labelled as a negative orientalist representation.

---

<sup>59</sup> Barratt 134.

<sup>60</sup> Rushdie 10.

<sup>61</sup> Cronin 3.

## Conclusion

There are several postcolonial critics who see Forster and his main novel, *A Passage to India*, in the context of colonial politics, as imperial. They, however, fail to see that he often communicates his anti-imperialism in a unique way. The critic, Sujit Mukherjee, a contemporary Indian writer who lives in India and who is open minded rather than restricted in his political thinking, illustrates this about Forster. Mukherjee is less admiring of those novelists who are dogmatic in their attack of colonialism:

we realise that Orwell did not keep separate his own voice from that of the narrator of *Burmese Days*. And since this narrator has the same viewpoint and attitudes as John Flory, the 'hero' of the novel, we may justifiably charge Orwell with having misused the novel-form in his anxiety to condemn imperialism.<sup>1</sup>

Rather, Mukherjee praises Forster's 'artistic' vision of the colonial experience in comparison to other writers who have in their narratives focused to a greater extent on historical and political 'facts'. He believes that Forster shapes our sense of history and politics not by fact alone but in a deeper sense which captures the spirit of the time:

trying to locate what has gone wrong with the relationship between the British and the Indians. . . . With the genuine artist's instinct, Forster is able to make a symbolic statement of the problem; and this probes deeper than Thompson's<sup>2</sup> essentially historian's attempt to co-relate causes and effects through summary and documentation. Thompson knows his India better but this knowledge does not help him to write the better novel.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Sujit Mukherjee, *Forster And Further: The Tradition of Anglo-Indian Fiction* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1991) 36–37.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Thompson wrote a number of Anglo-Indian novels, such as *A farewell to India* (1931) and *Night falls on Siva's hill* (1933).

<sup>3</sup> Mukherjee 16.

Mukherjee's appraisal of the novel is more balanced and subtle. He acknowledges the significance of the colonial experience and he also remembers that it is being reconstructed through the novel form.

Mukherjee's critique could be received with suspicion because he praises the novel for 'traditional' values, such as 'longevity', 'universality' and 'humanity'. These are the very values that postcolonialists have tried to deconstruct in their criticism. For example, he makes the following claim for the novel: "But the possibility that this community[Anglo-Indian] may have misunderstood its role in the affairs of the world, that this fiction sometimes gave shape to an argument larger than the one between the colonizer and the colonized, was perceived by E.M. Forster. . . . Accordingly, *A Passage* opened up for portrayal varieties of human behaviour. . . ." <sup>4</sup> The significance of Mukherjee's critique is that it shows that the novel's suggestions of 'humanity' and 'universality' are not necessarily orientalist in a negative sense nor simply Eurocentric all the time. Just because the novel is also about more than the coloniser-colonised relationship does not then mean that Forster has been evasive because he is essentially an imperialist. While the novel goes beyond constructed divisions in some ways, it also acknowledges differences.

The main way in which Forster conveys his humanism is through an ironic sense of history. In terms of the coloniser-colonised relationship, the novel shows how the coloniser is in some ways colonised himself. V. S. Naipaul reflects Forster's sense of irony in his view that "it is not only the disenfranchised and the marginalized that end up as dupes of history. The mighty empires of the world have fared no differently. . . ." <sup>5</sup> His ironic sense of history is inspired by an old Indian source. In a little piece called 'Hymn Before Action', Forster tells the story of Arjuna's battle in the Bhagavad-Gita.

---

<sup>4</sup> Mukherjee 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> P. S. Chauhan, "V. S. Naipaul: History as Cosmic Irony," *Reworlding: The Literature Of The Indian Diaspora*, ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992) 19.



He relates how Arjuna, although victorious, feels disillusionment and remorse afterwards. Krishna's wise conclusion is: "The fall of his enemies leads to his own, for the fortunes of men are all bound up together, and it is impossible to inflict damage without receiving it."<sup>6</sup> Forster is not interested in simply seeing the colonial experience in terms of antithetical absolutes, that is, East-West, coloniser-colonised and good-evil. There are many suggestions of good and evil in the novel but they are usually ambiguous. Godbole is a symbol of a continuum as he suggests that good and evil are interrelated not binary opposites. Furthermore, as the critic Alok Bhalla says, "any analysis of our colonial past ought to be as much about our own capacity for evil, as it is about the predatoriness of Empire builders and invaders; it must always assume that the . . . administrators, memsahibs or priests were not creatures of a species different from ours."<sup>7</sup> Forster displays his humanism in his intention to promote understanding between the two races and not hatred. According to him: "The peril that may destroy our world is hardness, heartlessness, ideological zeal untempered by humanity. "<sup>8</sup> Forster strongly believes that ideological zeal, whether in the form of British colonialism or Indian nationalism, is universally dangerous if it excludes a recognition of our common humanity.

Critics might be surprised by the following claim for the novel by Mukherjee, if they think that the significance of *A Passage to India* is limited to the period of Anglo-Indian fiction: "This longevity embraced not only the novels that have come after but also those which preceded it, because Forster's novel enables us to look both ways and find links that were waiting to be 'only connected'".<sup>9</sup> It suggests links between a colonial and a postcolonial history. Forster certainly influenced other Anglo-Indian writers, for

---

<sup>6</sup> "Hymn Before Action" [first published 1912], *Abinger Harvest* 330.

<sup>7</sup> Bhalla 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> "For the Museum's Sake" [first published 1920], *Abinger Harvest* 284.

<sup>9</sup> Mukherjee 1.

example, Ruth Praver Jabhvala's *Heat and Dust* (1927) and *A New Dominion* (1972), Paul Scott's novels about the Raj, Christine Weston's *Indigo* (1944) and even Indian writers, such as Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960). However, the novel's connections with postcolonial writers have not always been so positive. For example, *Midnight's Children* contains an ironic awareness on Rushdie's part of the 'Novel of Empire', such as *A Passage to India*. Brennan comments: "He jestingly opens the novel with a character he names 'Dr Aziz'. . . ." <sup>10</sup> Furthermore, in Manohar Malgonkar's novel *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) Crane draws attention to the passage which reads: "Was it his youth that made him so shallow, he wondered, or was it part of the Indian character itself? Did he in some way, represent the average Indian, mixed-up, shallow and weak? Like someone out of *A Passage to India*, Aziz, or someone even more confused, quite despicable, in fact, like that boy whose name he had forgotten, Rafi, that was it. Was he like Rafi?" <sup>11</sup> If this is a response to Forster's evasion and misrepresentation of the colonised Indian's perspective, we must also bear in mind that the novel is self-deconstructive when it deliberately leaves gaps and contains absences in its representation of a different politics, culture, race, class, religion and gender.

By the same token, the thesis has been very much about divisions, binaries and it does have its historical limitations. *A Passage to India* does not desire to be the final word on India and its changing history. Naik, on the contrary, believes that if the novel is 'scrutinised intensively' it will display the intention to close down discussion of India not open it out. He claims: "we are assured that *Kim* or *A Passage to India* is the very last word on India, which neither novel actually proves to be, when intensively scrutinised." <sup>12</sup> Some critics, for the sake of their arguments, have simplified Forster but he remains ambiguous because of his complex voice: "by his very certainties Kipling

---

<sup>10</sup> Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World* 82.

<sup>11</sup> Crane 5.

<sup>12</sup> Naik xi.

had set a time-limit to the continuity of Anglo-Indian fiction; whereas, by the multivalence of his offering Forster bestowed a long future upon this tradition.”<sup>13</sup> If Forster’s novel is not committed to a specific narrative of India (such as the narratives of Indian nationalism or the Indian poor), partly as a result of a desire to be universal rather than local, it does at least offer the idea that western discourses are not all-embracing and that there are other ways to see the British colonisation of India, India and life.

Postcolonial and postmodern discourses both enhance and limit our study of the canonical text. They question its authority to represent the colonial experience and this is helpful, but the danger exists when critics see everything the novel has to offer in terms of a negative colonialism/orientalism. After all, which writer can escape orientalism and colonisation completely when representing the ‘other’. The limitation of the postcolonial discourse has been demonstrated in the case of Edward Said who has tried to fit canonical texts to a general Orientalist model which is especially damaging to E. M. Forster’s novel, *A Passage to India* because it is a subtle novel. This is very much a novel about blindness and vision and it suggests the need ‘to connect’ the universality and the diversity of human experience. Said fails to see Forster’s ambiguity which makes his novel with all its limitations, even more valuable. *A Passage to India*, if more fully understood and liberated from limiting interpretations, can, on the contrary, contribute to the political thinking of the postcolonial/postmodern era we live in now.

---

<sup>13</sup> Mukherjee 8.

## Works Cited

### Primary Sources

- Forster, E. M. *A Passage to India* (1924). Ed. Oliver Stallybrass. London: Penguin, 1936.
- — —. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905). Ed. Oliver Stallybrass. London: Penguin, 1959.
- — —. *A Room With a View* (1908). Ed. Oliver Stallybrass. London: Penguin, 1955.
- — —. *Abinger Harvest*. London: Edward Arnold, 1936.
- — —. *Howards End* (1910). London: Penguin, 1941.
- — —. *Aspects of the Novel* (1927). Ed. Oliver Stallybrass. London: Pelican, 1962.
- — —. *Two Cheers For Democracy* (1951). London: Edward Arnold, 1972.
- — —. *The Hill of Devi* (1953). London: Penguin, 1965.
- — —. *The Government Of Egypt: Recommendations . . . With Notes On Egypt*  
London: Labour Research Department; International Section, 1921.

### Secondary sources

- Achebe, Chinua. *Hopes And Impediments: Selected Essays*. New York: Anchor, 1990.
- Ahmed, Aijaz. *In Theory: Nations, Communities*. London: Verso, 1992.
- Amyot, Grant. "Tales of the Raj." *Queens Quartely* 92 (1985): 889–891.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Relections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.
- Armstrong, Paul B. "Reading India: E. M. Forster and the Politics of Interpretation." *Twentieth Century Literature* 38.4 (Winter 1992): 365-385.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989.

- Barratt, Robert. "Marabar: The Caves of Deconstruction." *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 23.2 (Spring 1993): 127-135.
- Barucha, Rustom. "The 'Boom' of David Lean's *A Passage to India*." *Before His Eyes*. Ed. Bert Cardullo. Lanham: University Press of America, 1986. 155-161.
- Bhalla, Alok, and Sudhir Chandra, eds. *Indian Responses to Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1993.
- Brennan, Timothy. *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*. New York: St. Martin Press, 1989.
- Carroll, John. *Humanism: the Wreck of Western Culture*. London: Fontana Press, 1993.
- Chaudhuri, Nirad C. "Passage To and From India." *Twentieth Century Interpretations of A Passage to India: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Andrew Rutherford. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970. 68-77.
- Chaudhuri, Amit. "Bankura's Englishman." Rev. of *Alien Homage: Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore*, by E. P. Thompson. *London Review of Books* 15.18 23 Sept. 1993: 10-11.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness* (1902). Ed. Paul O'Prey. London: Penguin, 1973.
- Couto, Maria. "Clinging to the Wreckage: Raj Fictions." *Encounter* 63.3 (Sept/Oct 1984): 34-40.
- Crane, Ralph J. *Inventing India: A History of India in English-Language Fiction*. London: Macmillan, 1992.
- Cronin, Richard. *Imagining India*. London: Macmillan, 1989.
- Denning, Greg. "Disembodied Artifacts: Edward Said's Culture And Imperialism." *Scripta* 9.1 (1993): 79-83.
- Doherty, Gerald. "White Circles/Black Holes: Worlds of Difference in *A Passage to India*." *Orbis Litterarum* 46 (1991): 105-122.
- Ebbatson, Roger, and Catherine Neale. *E. M. Forster: A Passage to India*. London: Penguin, 1989.

- Furbank, P. N. *E. M. Forster: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Gardner, Philip. *E. M. Forster: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan, 1973.
- Gellner, Ernest. "The Mightier Pen? Edward Said and the Double Standards of Inside-Out Colonialism." Rev. of *Culture And Imperialism*, by Edward Said. *Times Literary Supplement* 19 (1993): 3-4.
- Goonetilleke, D. C. R. A. "Ironies of Progress: Joseph Conrad and Imperialism in Africa." *Literature And Imperialism*. Ed. Robert Giddings. London: Macmillan, 1991.
- Gray, John. "Why the Owl Flies Late: The Inadequacies of Academic Liberalism." Rev. of *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, by Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit, eds. *Times Literary Supplement* (15 Oct 1993): 10-11.
- Hejazi, Safaa and Martin Quinn. "E. M. Forster and The Egyptian Mail: Wartime Journalism and a Subtext for *A Passage to India*." *English Literature in Transition* 25.3 (1982): 131-145.
- Huggan, Graham. "Transformations of the Tourist Gaze: India in Recent Australian Fiction." *Westerly* 4 (Summer 1993): 83-89.
- Inden, Ronald. *Imagining India*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990.
- JanMohamed, Abdul R. "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature." *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985).
- Kazan, Francesca. "Confabulations in *A Passage to India*." *Criticism* 29.2 (1987): 197-214.
- Kazin, Alfred. "*Howards End* Revisited." *Partisan Review* 59.129 (1992): 29-43.
- Kipnis, Laura. "The Phantom Twitchings of an Amputated Limb: Sexual Spectacle in the Post-Colonial Epic." *Wide Angle* 11.4 (Oct 1989): 42-51.
- Langland, Elizabeth. "Gesturing Toward an Open Space: Gender, Form, and Language in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*." *Out Of Bounds*. Ed. L. Claridge, and E. Langland. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, (1990): 252-267.

- Lawrence, Karen R. *Decolonising Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century "British" Literary Canons*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Lindley, Arthur. "Raj as Romance/Raj as Parody: Lean's and Forster's *A Passage to India*." *Film/Literature Quarterly* 20. 1 (1992): 61-67.
- Miller, Alex. "Chinese Connections and Disconnections." *24 Hours* (Dec 1993): 91-93.
- Mukherjee, Sujit. *Forster and Further: The Tradition of Anglo-Indian Fiction*. Bombay: Orient Longman, 1993.
- Naik, M. K. *Mirror on the Wall: Images of India and the Englishman in Anglo-Indian Fiction*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1991.
- Nelson, Emmanuel S., ed. *Reworlding: The Literature of the Indian Diaspora*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992.
- Orwell, George. *Burmese Days* (1934). London: Penguin, 1944.
- Parry, Benita. "The Politics of Representation in *A Passage to India*." *A Passage to India*. Ed. John Beer. London: The Macmillan Press, 1985. 27-43.
- Pradhan, N.S. "Kipling's India." *Yearly Review* 2 (1988): 13-30.
- Restuccia, Frances. L. "A Cave of My Own: E. M. Forster and Sexual Politics." *Raritan* 9 (1989): 110-128.
- Robinson, Andrew. *Satyajit Ray The Inner Eye*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays And Criticism 1981-1991*. Granta Books, 1992.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture And Imperialism*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1993.
- . *Orientalism* (1978). London: Penguin, 1987.
- . *The World, The Text, And The Critic*. London: Faber and Faber, 1993.
- Shaheen, Mohammed. "Forster's Salute to Egypt." *Twentieth Century Literature* 39.1 (Spring 1993): 32-46.
- Sharpe, Jenny. "The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency." *Genders* 10 (1991): 25-46.

- Silver, R. Brenda. 'Periphrasis, Power, and Rape in A Passage to India.' *Novel* 22 (1988): 86-105.
- Singh, Frances B. "A Passage to India, the National Movement, and Independence." *Twentieth Century Literature* 31 (1985): 265-278.
- Stallybrass, Oliver. Introduction. *A Passage to India*. By E. M. Forster. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979. 7-28.
- Suleri, Sara. *The Rhetoric Of English India*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- . "The Geography of A Passage to India." *Literature In The Modern World*. Ed. Dennis Walder. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. 245-250.
- Trilling, Lionel. *E.M. Forster*. London: Hogarth Press, 1959.
- . *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.
- Trivedi, Harish. *Colonial Transactions English Literature And India*. Calcutta: Papyrus, 1993.
- Vanaik, Achin. "Reflections on Communalism and Nationalism in India." *New Left Review* 196 (Nov/Dec 1992): 43-63.
- White, Andrea. *Constructing and Deconstructing the Imperial Subject*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

### ***Works Consulted***

- Attridge, Steve. "Echoes of Empire: Dis-Oriented Fictions." *Encounter* 66 (1986): 60-70.
- Barker, Francis et al., ed. *Europe and its others : Proc. of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature in the Department of Essex. July 1984*. Colchester: University of Essex, 1985.
- . *Literature, Politics and Theory*. London: Methuen, 1986.



- Barrett, Elizabeth. "Comedy, Courtesy, and *A Passage to India*." *English Studies In Canada* 10.1 (March 1984): 77-93.
- Barucha, Rustom. *Theatre and the World: Essays on Performance and politics of Culture*. Columbia: South East Asia, 1990.
- Batchelor, John. *The Edwardian Novelists*. London: Duckworth, 1982.
- Bayley, J. "Prigs, Muffs and Sahibs." *Listener* 22 (1978-1979): 123-124.
- Beer, G. "Negation in *A Passage to India*." *Essays in Criticism* 30 (1980): 151-166.
- Beer, John, and G. K Das. *E. M. Forster: A Human Exploration*. London: Macmillan, 1979.
- Belliappa, K. C. *The Image Of India In English Fiction: Studies in Kipling, Myers and Raja Rao*. Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1991.
- — —. "The meaning of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 16.1 (1991).
- Beyer, Kathleen Collins. "Intertextuality In E. M. Forster." *The Literary Half-Yearly* 33.2 (July 1992): 23-30.
- Bhabha, Homi. *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Bloom, Harold. *Rudyard Kipling's Kim*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
- Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. "The Romantic Impasse in *A Passage to India*." *Criticism* 22 (1980): 40-56.
- Bongie, Chris. *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siecle*. California: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Born, Daniel. "Private Gardens, Public Swamps: *Howards End* and the Revaluation of Liberal Guilt." *Novel* 25.2 (Winter 1992): 141-159.
- Bose, Sujit. *Attitudes to Imperialism: Kipling, Forster and Paul Scott*. Delhi: Amar Prakashan, 1990.
- Bowen, M. "Once More to Chandrapore." *Modern Philology* 80 (1982): 61-76.
- Bradbury, Malcolm, and J. McFarlane, eds. *Modernism*. Penguin: London, 1976.
- Bradbury, Malcolm. *Forster: A Collection of Critical essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

- Brantlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830–1914*. London: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Brock, G. "Language, Truth and Logic in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*." *Studies in the Novel* 10 (1978): 251–266.
- Buhariwala, Shernavaz. *Arcades To A Dome: Humanism in the Novels of E. M. Forster*. Bombay: Somaiya, 1983.
- Bulbeck, Chilla. "Third World Women: Dialogues with Western Feminism." *Meanjin* 2 (1992): 319–332.
- Buzard, James Michael. "Forster's Trespasses: Tourism and Cultural Politics." *Twentieth century Literature* 34.2 (Summer 1988) 155–179.
- Cameron, Iain. "Why Must it be Them Against Us?" Rev. of *Culture And Imperialism*., by Edward Said. *The Weekend Australian* 10–11 July. 1993: 5.
- Cavaliero. *A Reading of E. M. Forster*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1979.
- Cooperman, Stanely. "The Imperial Posture and The Shrine of Darkness: Kipling's *The Naulahka* and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*." *English Literature in Transition* 6 (1963).
- Corbey, Raymond. and Joep Leerssen. *Alterity, Identity, Image: Selves and Others in Society and Scholarship*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, B.V., 1991.
- Cox, C. B. *The Free Spirit : A Study of Liberal Humanism in the Novel" of George Eliot, Henry James, E. M. Forster, Virginia Wolf, Angus Wilson* London: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Crew, Shirley. "Fictions of Princely States and Empire." *Ariel* 17 (1986): 103–117.
- Crews, Frederick. C. *E. M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Cronin, Richard. "The Indian English Novel." *Modern Fiction Studies* 33 (1987): 201–213.
- D' Cruz, Doreen. "Emptying and Filling Along the Existential Coil in *A Passage to India*." *Studies in the Novel* 18 (1986): 193–205.
- Das, G. K. *E. M. Forster's India*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1977.

- Doloff, Steven. "Forster's Use of Name in *A Passage to India*." *English Language Notes* 28.4 (June 1991): 61-62.
- Dowling, David. *Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1985.
- . "A *Passage to India* through 'The Spaces between the Words.'" *Journal of Narrative Technique* 15 (1985): 256-266.
- Faulker, Peter. *Humanism in the English novel*. London: Elek/Pemberton, 1975.
- Finkelstein, B. B. *Forster's Women: Eternal Differences*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
- Firchow, P. E. "Another Centenary: E. M. Forster." *Modern Fiction Studies* 25 (1980): 559-561.
- Gillie, Christopher. *A Preface to Forster*. New York: Longman, 1983.
- Gloversmith, Frank, ed. *The Theory of Reading*. Brighton: Harvester, 1984.
- Godfrey, Dennis. *E. M. Forster's Other Kingdom*. London: Oliver & Boyd, 1968.
- Goonetilleke, D. C. R. A. *Images of the Raj : South Asia in the Literature of Empire*. London: Macmillan Press, 1988.
- . "Colonial Neuroses: Kipling and Forster." *Ariel* 5 (1974) 56-68.
- Gordan, Jan B. "The Third Cheer: 'Voice' in Forster." *Twentieth Century Literature* 31. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1985): 315-328.
- Gowda, Anniah. "A Garland for E.M. Forster." *The Literary Half-Yearly* (1969).
- Graham, Kenneth. *Indirections of the novel : James, Conrad, and Forster*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Greet, Annie, Syd Harrex, and Susan Hosking. *Raj Nostalgia*. Adelaide: CRNLE, 1992.
- Gupta, B.S. *The Glassy Essence*. Kurukshetra: Kurukshetra University, 1976.
- Herz, Judith Scherer. and Robert. K. Martin. *E. M. Forster: Centenary Revaluations*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1982.
- Herz, Judith Scherer. "The Remaking of the Past in Forster's Non-Fiction." *Twentieth Century Literature* 31.2-3 (Summer-Fall 1985): 287-296.

- Islam, Shamsul. *Chronicles of the Raj: A Study of Literary Reaction to the Imperial Idea towards the End of the Raj*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1979.
- Johnson, Barbara. *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981.
- Jose, Nicholas. "Chinese Connections and Disconnections." *24 Hours* (Dec 1993): 88-90.
- Kabbani, Rana. *Europe's Myths Of Orient*. London: Pandora Press, 1986.
- Kermode, Frank. *Modern Essays*. London: Collins, 1971.
- Kirkpatrick, B.J. *A Bibliography of E. M. Forster*. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1965.
- Land, Stephen K. *Challenge and Conventionality in the Fiction of E. M. Forster*. New York: AMS Press, 1990.
- Levenson, Michael H. *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge press, 1991.
- London, Bette. *The Appropriated Voice: Narrative Authority in Conrad, Forster and Woolf*. USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1990.
- Mahood, Molly. *The Colonial Encounter*. London: Rex Collings, 1977.
- Martin, John.S. *E.M. Forster: The Endless Journey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. "St. Mawr, *A Passage to India* and the Question of Influence." *D. H. Lawrence Review* 13 (1980): 134-149.
- May, Brian. "Neoliberalism in Rorty and Forster." *Twentieth Century Literature* 39. 2 (Summer 1993): 185-207.
- McClure, John A. "Late Imperial Romance." *Raritan* 10.4 (Spring 1991): 111-130.
- McConkey, James. *The Novels of E. M. Forster*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957.
- Merrett, Robert James. E. M. "Forster's Modernism: Tragic Faith in *A Passage to India*." *Mosaic* 17 (1984): 71-86.
- Meyers, Jeffrey. *Fiction and the Colonial Experience*. Ipswich: The Boydell Press, 1973.

- Michofiska-stadnik, Anna. "The Function of Foreign Settings in E. M. Forster's Fiction." *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny* 27.4 (1980): 427-437.
- Millicent, Bell. "What Happened in the Cave?" *Partisan Review* 53 (1986) 103-110.
- Moffat, Wendy. "A *Passage to India* and the Limits of Certainty." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 20 (1990) 331-341.
- Moran, Jo Ann Hoepfner. "E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*: What Really Happened in the Caves." *Modern Fiction Studies* 34 (1988): 596-604.
- Morley, Patricia. A. "E. M. Forster's 'Temple': Eclectic or Visionary?" *University of Toronto Quartely* 39 (1970): 229-241.
- Mukherjee, Arun. *Towards an Aesthetic of Opposition: Essays On Literature Criticism and Cultural Imperialism*. Ontario: Williams-Wallace Publishers, 1988.
- Naslund, S. J. "Fantasy, Prophecy, and Point of View in *A Passage to India*." *Studies in the Novel* 7 (1975).
- Noble, R. W. "'Dearest Forster' – 'Dearest Masood' an East-West Friendship." *Encounter* 56 (1981) 61-72.
- . "The Genesis of E.M. Forster's Novel." *Encounter* 54 (1980) 51-61.
- Parry, Benita. *Delusions and Discoveries: Studies on India in the British Imagination 1880-1930*. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1972.
- . "Passage to More Than India." *Forster: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Malcolm Bradbury. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966.
- Pathak, Zakia, Saswati Sengupta, and Sharmila Purkayasha. "The Prisonhouse of Orientalism." *Textual Practice* 5.2 (Summer 1991): 195-218.
- Piroëlle, Ann. "Order Through Creation in a World of Chaos." *Cahiers Victoriens Edouardiens* 27 (April 1988) : 63-71.
- Potter, Nicholas. *A Passage to India: the Crisis of 'Reasonable Form.'* *Durham University Journal* 83.2 (July 1991) 209-213.
- Rajan. P. K. "Patterns of Cultural Orientation in the Approach to Indian Reality: A Study Based on the Writings of V. S.Naipaul, E. M. Forster, Nirad C. Chaudhuri

- and Mulk Anand Raj.” *Journal of the School of Languages* 8. 1–2 (1981–1982): 121-135.
- Rao, Raja. *The Serpent And The Rope* (1960). New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1968.
- Roessel, David. “Live Orientals and Dead Greeks: Forster’s Response to the Chanak crisis.” *Twentieth Century Literature* 36 (1990): 43–60.
- Rosencrance, Barbara. “Forster’s Comrades.” *Partisan Review* 47.4 (1980): 591–603.
- Said, Edward. Reply to Letter of Ernest Gellner *Times Literary Supplement* (March 19 1993): 15.
- Sathiamurthy, Pauline. “Forster and Lawrence: A Political Quest.” *The Literary Half-Yearly* 13 (July 2 1992): 43-47.
- Schwarz, Daniel R. “The Originality of E. M. Forster.” *Modern Fiction Studies* 29.4 (Winter 1983): 623-641.
- Showalter, Elaine. “*A Passage to India* as ‘Marriage Fiction’: Forster’s Sexual Politics.” *Women and Literature* 5 (1977): 3-16.
- Singh, Bhupal. *A Survey Of Anglo-Indian Fiction*. London: Curzon Press, 1974.
- Sinha, R.K. *The Paradise Lost : A Study of Modern English Novels*. Delhi: Amar Prakashan, 1989.
- Stone, Wilfred. *The Cave and the Mountain: a Study of E. M. Forster*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966.
- Stubbs, Patricia. *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel*. New York: Harvester Press, 1979.
- Suleri, Sara. “Amorphous India: Questions of Geography.” *Southwest Review* (1986): 389-400.
- Tariq, Rahman. “Edward Carpenter’s *From Adam’s Peak To Elephanta* as a Source for E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*.” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 22 (1986) 10–15.
- . “The Significance of Oriental Poetry in E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*.” *Durham University Journal* 50 (1988): 101-110.

- Thomas, Nicholas. *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*.  
Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994.
- Thorpe, Michael. "Calling the Kettle Black: Some Thoughts on 'Cultural Imperialism'." *Encounter* 73.5 (1989): 40-44.
- Thumboo, Edward. "From Caves to Court." *Southern Review* 10 (1977): 112-144.
- Tinsley, Molly B. "Muddle Et Cetera: Syntax in *A Passage to India*." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 9.3 (Fall 1979): 191-198.
- Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*.  
London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1989.
- Watt, Donald. "E. M. Forster's Second War." *The Yale Review* 69.3 (March 1980):  
401-410.
- — —. "E.M. Forster's Quarrel with the Godstate." *Philology Quarterly* 60 (1981): 523-  
537.
- West, Richard. "Rushdie and the Raj." *Spectator*, April 7, (1984): 18-19.
- Wilde, Alan. "Modernism And The Aesthetics Of Crisis." *Contemporary Literature* 21.1  
(1979): 13-51.
- Winks, Robin W. and Rush James R. *Asia in Western Fiction*. Honolulu: University of  
Hawaii Press, 1990.
- Wurgaft, Lewis D. *The Imperial Imagination: Magic and Myth in Kipling's India*.  
Conneticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1983.
- Young, Vernon. "Not Yet, Not There." *Hudson Review* 38 (1985): 293-296.
- Zwerdling, Alex. "Forster, Bloomsbury, and the Problems of Literary Biography." *Sewanee Review* 88 (1980): 616-622.